This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

UC-NRLF
$B 183 070

THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA

CERF LIBRARY
PRESENTED BY
REBECCA CERF '02
IN THE NAMES OF
CHARLOTTE CERF '95
MARCEL E. CERF '97
BARRY CERF '02

The Premier and the Painter...

By I. ZANGWILL.

Author of "The Master," "The Big Bow Mystery," "The King of Schnorrers," etc.

With special preface by the author for the American edition.

This is a delightful novel—

intricate in plot, extremely exciting, and sparkling with wit—in short, a novel such as Mr. Zangwill alone could write.

—Rich Cloth Binding
—designed by
—A. A. Archibald. Price . . . **$1.00**

Sent to any address, postage prepaid, on receipt of price by the publishers.

RAND, McNALLY & CO.
Chicago and New York.

Pabst Malt Extract
The Best Tonic

ALONE WORTHY OF CONFIDENCE.—I have no hesitancy in saying that I find the "Best" Tonic, not only excellent in fever, but immediately beneficial in tonic effect on the processes of digestion. In fact, it so far exceeds other malt extracts which I have used, that I consider it the only preparation of the kind worthy of any confidence.

Boston, Mass. FRANK P. DYER, M. D.

ALL DRUGGISTS SELL PABST MALT EXTRACT.

When answering this advertisement please mention Globe Library.

THE WORLD'S BREAKFAST

AT ALL GROCERS. IN 2-LB PACKAGES

When answering this advertisement please mention Globe Library.

CRIQUETTE.

BY

LUDOVIC HALÉVY,

AUTHOR OF "THE ABBÉ CONSTANTIN."

Translated by

ARTHUR D. HALL.

CHICAGO AND NEW YORK.
RAND, McNALLY & COMPANY,
PUBLISHERS.

Genuine
COSMO
COSMO
COSMO
COSMO

STANDARD OF THE WORLD

BUTTERMILK TOILET SOAP

THE BEST SOAP IN THE WORLD FOR THE COMPLEXION, TOILET & BATH.

Note style of Package and TAKE NO OTHER

COSMO BUTTERMILK SOAP CO. CHICAGO.

Direct from Distiller To Consumer

$3.20 EXPRESS PAID.

Saving Middlemen's Profits Preventing Possibility of Adulteration

We are distillers with a wide reputation of 30 years standing. Our whole enormous product is sold to consumers direct. We sell direct so that our whiskey may be pure when it reaches you. For medicinal purposes adulterated whiskey is dangerous. For sideboard purposes it is abominable, yet it is almost impossible to get pure whiskey from dealers. We have tens of thousands of customers who never buy elsewhere. A customer who once tries our whiskey is a customer always. We want more of them, and we make the following offer to get them:

We will send four full quart bottles of **Hayner's Seven Year Old Double Copper Distilled Rye for $3.20, Express Prepaid.** We ship in plain packages—no marks to indicate contents (which will avoid possible comment). When you get it and test it, if it isn't satisfactory return it at our expense and we will return your $3.20. Such whiskey cannot be purchased elsewhere for less than $5.00.

We are the only distillers selling to consumers direct. Others who claim to be are dealers, buying and selling. Our whiskey has our reputation behind it.

References—Dun or Bradstreet or any bank or business house in Dayton.

Hayner Distilling Co., 215 to 221 W. 5th St., Dayton, O.

When answering this advertisement please mention Globe Library.

Copyright, 1890, by Rand, McNally & Co.

PQ2273
C7E5
1891

TO

S. C. AND J. C.

IN MEMORY OF MANY HAPPY DAYS

IN EVANSTON,

THIS TRANSLATION IS DEDICATED.

CHICAGO, January 1, 1891.

M590020

H

CRIQUETTE.

I.

It was early in the month of April, 1859. The school in the Place de la Mairie, of Belleville, had just been dismissed, and the little girls came pouring out in tumultuous disorder, all chattering and screaming at once. Suddenly a dispute arose, followed by a skirmish. A big girl threw down a poor little thing, who cried and struggled. All the others formed a circle and maliciously enjoyed the spectacle.

A boy passed along, carrying upon his head an empty basket. He approached, broke the circle, placed his basket on the ground, and, snatching the little girl from the grasp of the big one, exclaimed, defiantly:

"Let her alone! Don't one of you dare to touch her again!"

The boy had a determined look about him, and no one ventured to move.

"Come with me," he said to the little girl.

But she was wild with anger, and she made a movement to jump at her big opponent.

"Stop that! Stop that!" cried the boy. "Come with me, I tell you!"

He dragged her off, and after they had gone a little way down the street, he said:

"Where do you live?"

"Not very far from here; No. 7 Rue de Tourtille."

"I will take you home. That big coward is following us, ready to grab you again. Do you live with your mamma?"

"Yes."

"What does she do?"

"She sells apples at the corner of a street—apples in winter and flowers in summer. Do you live with your mamma, too?"

"I have no mamma."

"With your papa, then?"

"I have no papa, either."

"Are they dead?"

"I suppose so; I never had any."

"How old are you?"

"Twelve. How old are *you?*"

"Ten. Are you a pastry-cook?"

"I am a pastry-cook's boy; the one at the corner of the Rue de Paris, near the omnibus stand."

"Do you make much money?"

"Oh, not millions. Ten francs a month. But I get my board and clothes. So, with my ten francs I can buy plays at four sous apiece. When I grow up, I am going to be an actor."

"An actor! They play in theatres, don't they?"

"Yes. Have you ever been to the theatre?"

"No."

"I have been seven times in Belleville with my friends, and once to the Ambigu. I saw tragedies played. Oh! tragedies are splendid; full of fighting and killing. Ah, here's your house. Good-bye!"

"What's your name?"

"Pascal. What's yours?"

"Mine? Céline. But mamma calls me Criquette."

"Criquette is funnier. I like it better than Céline. Well, good-bye, Criquette!"

"Good-bye, Pascal! Say—do you want to be friends with me? I don't go to school on Sundays. Come and see me, and we will play together."

"Oh, I can't. Sundays I sell cakes for my master on the boulevards. But when I pass the school on week-days, I will watch for you. Good-bye, Criquette!"

"Good-bye, Pascal!"

She was well named Criquette, for in appearance she was not unlike a cricket—thin, lank, and pale, but with a healthy, intelligent look. Great black eyes lighted up her sallow face. Criquette's mother, the vender of fruits and flowers, was very, very poor, although she had once been in more comfortable circumstances. The father, Louis Brinquart, was a house-painter, a good workman, who toiled all day; never went to the public houses, loved his wife, and adored his little girl. Three years before, he had been instantly killed, by a fall from the scaffolding to the pavement. His comrades followed him to the grave,

and after leaving the cemetery, repaired to the nearest drinking-place. The mother took her little one by the hand and walked home through the snow to Belleville.

One morning at daybreak, during the winter of 1828, some masons, on their way to their work, found something wrapped up in an old number of an illustrated paper at the corner of the Fauborg Saint-Antoine and the Rue Saint-Maur; they took this something to the police station; it was a child of the female sex, a little bundle of human flesh, all icy and blue with the cold. Why is it that it is so hard for some children to live, and so hard for others to die? This something lived and became the poor woman who, thirty years after, found herself in exactly the same condition she had been the first day of her life—alone in the world, absolutely alone. As a token of those short years of rest—for the poor, rest is happiness—there remained to her only a poor, cheap photograph, the portrait of *her man*, taken soon after her marriage, by a traveling photographer at the fair of Neuilly. And this portrait was already growing pale, and would soon fade away entirely.

Brinquart left in the savings bank four hundred and fifty francs, which he had laid aside sou by sou. "So that the little one shall not starve," he said, "if any accident should happen." The accident was death. The four hundred and fifty francs were soon eaten up. The poor woman then tried to establish a little business in fruit and flowers; she had plenty of

courage, but no strength, no health; her lungs were weak; she had never recovered from the terrible cold she took the day she was brought into the world. The business was a very hard one; she had to go early every morning to the market and return to Belleville, bending beneath the weight of her burden. How many times she had sat down on the edge of the sidewalk, sore and weary, before mounting the terrible hill of Belleville! The people of the neighborhood often gave her a helping hand. She never complained, did the best she could, and appealed to the board of charity only at the last extremity. She was resigned to her own lot, but she suffered greatly that she could not do more for her little Criquette. Bread, soup, and potatoes formed their usual bill of fare; they almost never had meat. For six years she lived in this way, aided a little by her neighbor who dealt in charcoal—an excellent woman, not rich, but with a tender, compassionate heart. The poor are helped by the poor much oftener than by the rich.

Such then was the first meeting of Criquette and Pascal; and the next day, when school was out, the boy was there, in the Place de la Mairie, watching for the little girl. She appeared, carrying her books and lunch-basket.

"I was waiting for you," said Pascal. "I wanted to see if that big girl was going to jump on you again. Do you want to take a little walk? I have the time. And then, here, I have brought you a cake. Our master gives us

one sometimes—old ones that are left over. Here, take it!"

"If there is only one, let us divide it."

"No, that is for you. I have already eaten one this morning. It is still good, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes!" replied the little girl, crunching the cake between her teeth.

"Our master is a very good man; we have plenty to eat. Do you? Not too much? Is your mamma poor?"

"Oh, yes."

"I don't suppose she makes very much money?"

"Oh, no."

"I will bring you cakes, sometimes, if you like them."

"Oh, yes."

"And then there is something else that I have been thinking about since yesterday. There is no school on Sundays, and you might come with me. I would sell my cakes, and you flowers. Your mamma could arrange them for you in a little basket. You are bright and nice, and you would please the people, I am sure of it. That is important in business. We could make lots of money."

"Oh, but mamma would not let me go like that, all alone."

"Not all alone—with me! Listen. I am going to ask your mamma. Day after to-morrow is Sunday. We will begin at once."

Criquette's mother at first made some objections

to the plan, but Pascal was eloquent and finally succeeded in overcoming them.

"Go to my master," he said, "and inquire about me in Belleville, wherever you like. Everyone knows me. And have no fear. I will take good care of your little girl. We will not go into Paris, that is forbidden; but around the suburbs to Saint-Fargeau Lake. You will see that every Sunday she will bring you home forty sous, and money that she has made, not begged. She will have a good walk; it will amuse her and do her good. It is bad for her to stay every Sunday in this miserable street. And then," he added with an air of confidence and authority, "we shall succeed; Madame Brinquart, we shall succeed!"

And indeed they did succeed. From the very first Sunday, Criquette sold all her flowers, and sold them at good prices. She attracted customers by her pretty manners, and she kept them by her bright chatter; her bunches of violets at a sou apiece disappeared as by enchantment; two or three brought ten sous. Criquette returned home with an enormous sum—three francs. The little firm of Pascal and Criquette very soon became popular in Belleville; to such a point that at the end of two months, after nine Sundays all profitable, one day the receipts were over five francs, and Pascal went to have a serious business talk with Madame Brinquart. He asked her to confide Criquette to him not only Sunday, but every day in the week.

"There is no need of her going to school any more. She knows how to read, write, and cipher. One day when we got a little mixed up with our money, Criquette took a bit of paper and added up two long rows of figures without making a single mistake. There is no use for a woman knowing any more than that. We get along so well together. She helps me to sell my cakes, and I help her to sell her flowers. And then she is full of ideas. Why, last Sunday at five o'clock our stock was all sold out; and it was she, Criquette, who thought of buying from a grocer some sticks of barley-sugar and some gingercakes for a sou apiece, and we sold them for two sous. That's something like business! And that was how Criquette had more than five francs. If you only knew how clever she is. She doesn't waste any time. She can tell right away who will buy and who won't. Don't be cross, Madame Brinquart; let me have Criquette, and we will make a fortune; you see if we don't."

Criquette begged and prayed, promised to be very careful, never to leave Pascal, and always to return before dark. The mother allowed herself to be persuaded. A new life began for the two children—a life happy and free. They were their own masters; they worked, they supported themselves, and every day the number of their customers increased. Everybody in Belleville and the suburbs knew them and bore them good-will. They felt that they were something more than mere children when, at night, they figured up their

receipts and counted their money. Pascal was the head of the firm. He was proud to protect Criquette, and Criquette was happy to be protected. But Pascal, after all, always yielded to Criquette's wishes. When Pascal said, "Let us go to the left," if Criquette answered, "No, let us go to the right," there would be a dispute; but the end of the dispute was always the same: Criquette always had her way.

For three months the life in the open air, in a sort of active, hard-working vagabondage, seemed to them delightful. They started off every morning, tramped the streets of Belleville, and then reached the Saint-Gervais meadows.

The surroundings of Paris have changed very much during the last thirty years. Thirty years ago, after the fortifications were passed you found yourself at once in the country. A poor, barren country, to be sure, but still the country, with little stunted trees, which gave Pascal and Criquette the impression of deep, majestic forests.

Here they stopped; here, in the heat of the midday, they found a little coolness and shade; and here they lunched off a big piece of bread, four sous' worth of cherries or strawberries, and the clear water of the fountain, drank from the hollow of the hand. A meagre fare, but one which, helped by the fresh air, agreed admirably with Criquette. She was less pale and thin than formerly. Sparkling with mischief and gaiety, her big black eyes blazed merrily in the middle

of her healthy, sunburned face. She walked from morning till night, and never felt tired.

After lunch they rested for an hour; but it was an hour well occupied, all the same. Pascal had promised Madame Brinquart to finish Criquette's education, and he kept his word. He had been one of the most brilliant pupils of the Belleville public school. The previous year, when eleven years of age, he had taken all the prizes—the prize for reading, the prize for spelling, the prize for geography, and the prize for arithmetic. Every day now he gave Criquette a lesson in dictation; and the words were invariably taken from one of those play-books which composed the library of the young professor. Criquette sat down upon the ground, with her back against the tree, a block of paper in her lap and a pencil in her hand; and Pascal, also seated on the ground, dictated to her, for example, this tirade from "The Man with the Three Faces; or, The Outlaw of Venice:" "I know that to succeed, there are many obstacles to be vanquished; I know that under the name of *Vivaldi*, I can not escape the decree which has set a price upon my head; that, under the name of *Edgar*, I am a mark for the daggers of the conspirators; and, finally, under that of *Abelino*, I am exposed to an infamous death!" (With enthusiasm.) And then Pascal was obliged to explain to Criquette that these last words must be placed in parentheses, and why.

(With enthusiasm.) "But what matters death to him who immortalizes himself! If I fall I carry

with me the consoling thought of having performed a glorious action, and leave behind the regrets and esteem of my friends."

"A period. That will do," said Pascal; and he proceeded conscientiously to correct Criquette's task, which was generally full of bad spelling. When the dictation was not too bad, the professor gave a cake to his pupil; and the pupil, in gratitude to the professor, offered him a stick of barley-sugar—for she had added the sale of barley-sugar to her trade in flowers.

Then came the turn of reading, always from the theatrical pamphlets; Pascal cared only for dramas, and Criquette was soon imbued with the same passion. The more sombre, extravagant, and incomprehensible the dramas were, the more keen was their enjoyment. They read in a loud voice, each in turn, frightened, charmed, overwhelmed with surprise and terror at all these adventures and atrocities, combats and duels, kidnapings and assassinations. Sometimes the scene was a sumptuous Venetian palace and sometimes a dirty Parisian lodging-house. Sometimes the poison of the Borgias flowed in streams, and sometimes the rag-picker's bludgeon fell with a thud.

They glided into mysterious subterranean caverns, and they heard resound the echoes of the famous Tower of the North. The dead bodies disappeared by dozens in the water of the lagoons. The walls had ears, and they walked within these walls with ears. It was a fantastic

defile of cruel tyrants, masked spies, rag-pickers, gagged maidens, noble lords, cabmen, dazzling princesses, and pretty flower-girls. Pascal and Criquette reveled in all these inexplicable and terrible things, delighted to tremble, delighted not to understand it all.

It is claimed that the drama is dead; perhaps that is because it tried to become too sensible, too reasonable. It flourished once, because authors were not bothered as to style, probability, and historical truth. The drama spoke then a language peculiar to itself, and one which was the delight of the public.

They applauded when the villain exclaimed: "Unfortunate mortals, do not envy the prosperity of crime; the pillow of remorse is stuffed with thorns!"

They applauded when an old sergeant, still black with powder, cried: "The Cossacks! Bah! Don't you know that we beat them at Austerlitz, two hours ago?"

Criquette had written these two speeches under the dictation of Pascal. He was highly satisfied with his little pupil. The faults in spelling were less frequent. But the month of October arrived, bringing short, chilly, and rainy days. There was less life in the streets, fewer promenaders in the Saint-Gervais meadows and at Romainville. The receipts diminished. Every evening Pascal brought home three-quarters of his cakes, and Criquette half of her barley-sugar; when winter came with its ice and snow, what would become of them both?

To crown their misfortunes, about the end of October Madame Brinquart fell ill. She was attacked with fever, was obliged to give up her trips to the market, and finally was unable to leave her bed. She was dependent upon Criquette, and the affairs of the poor child were in a very bad condition. No more flowers. Nothing but barley-sugar, which cost a sou a stick and had to be sold for two sous. Criquette experienced some very miserable days: twelve sous, fifteen sous, sometimes twenty sous, never more.

It was poverty—utter, complete poverty. And one Saturday afternoon, about five o'clock, as the two children were descending the Rue de Paris, after a day which had been even worse than the preceding days, Pascal said to Criquette:

"How much have you made?"

"Nine sous."

"Only nine sous?"

"Yes; I had eighteen sticks this morning, and I have nine left, a sou's profit a stick—"

"Yes, that makes only nine sous."

They walked on in silence. Then, after a moment's reflection, Pascal said:

"Look here, Criquette, this is Saturday, my pay-day. The master has raised my wages. He gives me now a hundred sous a week. You come with me to the shop, wait for me, and I will give you my hundred sous."

"Oh, no! I won't take them. It is your money, Pascal."

"Now, see here, Criquette; listen to me. If I had a mamma, and if she were poor and sick, and if I did not have any money, and if you had a hundred sous, wouldn't you give them to me?"

"Of course I would give them to you."

"Well, then, you ought to understand—here we are at the shop. Wait! I am going to bring you the hundred sous, and I will give them to you every Saturday as long as your mamma has to remain in bed. You will take them; you promise?"

"Yes; I promise."

"Thank you, Criquette."

She took the hundred sous. Mamma Brinquart was affected to tears when Criquette brought her Pascal's big coin. The same evening she related to the charcoal-woman what had occurred. The next morning the charcoal-woman told it to the butcher's wife, who told it to the cook at No. 22 Rue de Paris, who told it to her master. This master was the manager of the Belleville theatre, and a very good man as well. He knew the two children, who very often stationed themselves on the sidewalk in front of the stage door, to see the actors and actresses pass by. Pascal's one passion was the theatre. Not a day passed that he did not say to Criquette:

"When we grow up, we will go on the stage."

The manager of the Belleville theatre had noticed Criquette's brightness and prettiness. He had stopped many times in the street to buy flowers of her, and to make her talk. He found means to

come to Criquette's aid without untying his purse-strings.

The next evening, between the first and second acts of "The Pearl of Savoy," Criquette appeared at the entrance of the first gallery, and cried out at the top of her voice:

"Here you are! Cakes piping hot! Who wants hot cakes? Two sous for a hot cake!"

This was called out so boldly, in such a piercing and comical voice, that an immense burst of laughter broke out all over the house. Everybody turned around. Some gallery boys recognized her.

"Criquette! It's Criquette!"

At the same time, Pascal made his appearance at the other entrance to the gallery and repeated Criquette's cry:

"Here you are! Cakes piping hot! Who wants hot cakes? Two sous for a hot cake!"

The experiment was a tremendous success. Everybody wanted to buy cakes from Criquette. It became the fashion, the rage. Through the influence of the manager, a little contract in proper form was drawn up between the two children and Pascal's employer, by which they were to receive two centimes for each cake they sold. At once their sales amounted to from one hundred and fifty to two hundred cakes on week-days, and from three to four hundred on Sundays. United by the strongest and most innocent affection, the children made a common purse of their money; that is to say, all they made from the sale of the

cakes went for food and medicine for Mamma Brinquart.

The good lady recovered the following month, and resumed her old occupation at the street corner. The popularity which Criquette had gained in selling cakes was of advantage to her in her trade in flowers and barley-candy. The two children made on an average six or seven francs a day. They were literally rolling in money. Pascal added to his library quite a number of melodramas.

But this was not all. They went every evening to the theatre free. When the entr'acte was over, they climbed up to the third gallery, and there, beside the policeman on duty, with all their eyes and all their ears, devoured greedily the spectacle.

And what a variety there was in the répertoire! Always dramas, and a new piece every Saturday. So, during the course of the winter, Pascal and Criquette heard seven times each, without losing a syllable, "The Pearl of Savoy," "The Old Corporal," "The Pirates of the Savanna," "The Willow Copse," "Don Cæsar de Bazan," "Richard Arlington," etc., and fourteen times "The Tower of Nesle," which had an immense success and obtained the honor—a rare thing at Belleville—of a second series of representations.

"The Tower of Nesle" was the drama Criquette and Pascal liked best; their favorite reading, one of their classic works, and which had served for many dictations. So it happened that on the

evening of the fourteenth performance the two children discovered that they knew the entire piece by heart; and the fancy took them, during the second tableau of the third act, to go and play in the corridor the great scene between *Buridan* and *Margaret of Burgundy*. There, before three or four *ouvreuses*, who abandoned their knitting to watch them, they attacked resolutely the celebrated dialogue in the Orsini tavern.

"It is not the Bohemian."

"No, it is the captain; but if the captain is the Bohemian, it will come to the same thing."

Et cætera, et cætera, et cætera.

It did not go badly at all. The *ouvreuses* applauded and laughed till they cried. The two children skipped and mutilated many sentences, but their acting was full of confidence and spirit. They were absorbed by their parts, and their audacious variation of the text added to the charm of their interpretation.

At the moment that Criquette was delivering the speech, "What do you want of me, then? Do you want gold? You shall plunge your hands deep in the treasury of the State" — at that moment, chance brought toward the corridor the manager of the theatre, together with Bidache, a comedian of the Porte-Saint-Martin, who was interested in an actress of the company, and who, the preceding month, had come one evening to Belleville to play at the young lady's benefit.

Bidache and the manager stopped, listened, and brusquely entering the corridor, interrupted

the tirade of *Margaret of Burgundy*, who, red as a poppy, stammered and stopped short.

"That wasn't bad," said the manager. "Go on, Criquette, go on."

Go on! Play before a manager! Play before Monsieur Bidache! Criquette resisted but weakly, and soon regained all her confidence. The scene was resumed and brought to a close by the two children, with much spirit and drollery.

"They are very amusing," said the comedian of the Porte-Saint-Martin, "and they have both much talent, much talent, especially the little girl."

These last words vexed Pascal; he loved Criquette with all his heart, but he was already an artist, with all an artist's weakness.

II.

Two weeks afterward, Thursday, March 15, 1860, the following notice was pasted on all the bill-boards of the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre:

CLOSED

For the rehearsals of

GRI-GRI!

A Fairy Spectacle in Four Acts and Twenty Tableaux.

On Saturday the first public representation will positively be given.

It was nine o'clock in the evening, and the first act was just finished; the rehearsal was given before about twenty persons, seated in the orchestra stalls—the manager, the authors, the censor of plays, and some fifteen journalists. The authors of the piece were three in number—all three grave and gray-haired, all three furnished with a memorandum-book and a pencil, and all three taking notes. They were grouped about the manager, all three faces wearing a stern, threatening expression; and every now and then they exchanged looks full of meaning. From time to time, one of the three gentlemen would half rise, boiling with indignation, and try to interrupt the rehearsal and address the actors.

"Sit down! Sit down!" exclaimed the manager. "Let the rehearsal go on."

"But they do not respect the text. Gifflard, especially, gags all the time. Fancy! at rehearsal, before the first performance! What will it be afterward?"

"Please sit down. Take notes of everything. You can speak to Gifflard during the intermission."

The curtain fell upon a ballet of giants and dwarfs, a dance quite original in its way, and one that appeared to rather please, than otherwise, the fifteen newspaper men. They even deigned to applaud. The manager was delighted; but one of the three authors, the most important, tapping him dryly upon the shoulder, said to him in a most tragical tone:

"Let us go down to your office!"

"Yes," repeated the other two. "Let us go down to your office!"

"Very well."

When the door of the managerial apartment was closed upon them, the chief of the *collaborateurs*—he was decorated—spoke as follows:

"In the first place, let us try to be calm."

This was the beginning of a violent scene. The three authors declaimed in the most furious manner possible.

"The actors do not know a word of their parts! They have missed every point! The scenery is miserably handled! The electric light is all wrong! Half of the costumes must be made over! The chorus sung false! We will not allow our piece to be produced Saturday under such conditions!"

And all three, pale with anger, repeated:

"No! No! No! You shall not play it on Saturday!"

The manager faced them with a great display of courage and determination.

"The piece shall be played on Saturday. Everything is in readiness. The actors know their lines, but they are too weary to repeat them. They are worn out with all their rehearsals; but Saturday, at the public performance, they will have recovered, and will play admirably. If I should listen to you, more evenings would be given up to the rehearsals than to the performances. I am not willing to ruin myself simply to please you. Do you know what the twelve nights I have closed my house have cost me? More than two hundred thousand francs."

"Oh! Oh! Two hundred thousand francs!"

"Yes; more than two hundred thousand francs."

Then, one of the three authors, drawing nearer the manager, with folded arms and scowling brows, said portentiously:

"And how about your little Charlotte? What can you say of your little Charlotte? For three months we have told you again and again that she would not do, but you would not listen to us; and this evening you see what a failure your little Charlotte is."

"That is the first reasonable remark you have made," responded the manager. "Yes; I acknowledge that the child is incompetent."

"Incompetent! No one could hear a word she said! No one!"

"Granted. She was frightened, and her voice failed her; but the part is one of such slight importance—"

"Slight importance! Slight importance! Why, you evidently know nothing of the piece you have been rehearsing for the last three months. You pay all your attention to the ballets! There is the play also, the play, you understand, the play, which should count for something!"

"The part of the little Princess has not ten speeches."

"Yes, but what speeches! The entire piece centers about *Colibri;* and the climax is the kicking scene, at the end of the third act."

"And if the kicking scene fails in effect, the situation, and the end of the act, go for nothing. The whole piece is a failure. You will see that presently. Our third act will be ruined; and there are newspaper men in front. Your Charlotte will never make a success of the kicking scene."

The three authors, excited to the highest pitch, marched up and down the manager's office, gesticulating, and urging each other on; and it was ever the same cry:

"The kicking scene! Charlotte! The kicking scene! Charlotte! Never! never!"

The manager had thrown himself down in an arm-chair, and was reflecting. In spite of his prejudice in favor of the ballet, he was a good theatrical man. He knew the piece well; and he

realized that the kicking scene would indeed have much to do with its success.

At this moment the prompter entered, timidly followed by a young man dressed in a costume of yellow satin.

"Bidache complains of his costume," said the prompter.

"Oh!" retorted the manager, "what difference does it make about Bidache's costume?"

Then his anger was suddenly turned against the unfortunate prompter.

"It is all your fault! It was you who recommended that Charlotte to me! These gentlemen think she is execrable, and they are right. She *is* execrable!"

"But, Monsieur, we tried all the little girls connected with the theatre, and Charlotte was the best of them all; but this evening she saw the people in the front of the house, and she was frightened."

"You should have sought in other theatres, in the suburbs."

"I have done so, Monsieur, but in vain. The part is not a long one, but it is difficult and important."

"Important! You hear?" exclaimed one of the authors, triumphantly.

"Come, don't let us quarrel any more. Let us try to find a remedy. There was another one, named Mathilde, who was better than Charlotte."

"Oh, no, Monsieur. She was very weak, very weak, indeed."

At this moment, it occurred to Bidache, the gentleman in yellow satin who was dissatisfied with his costume, that he might appropriately take part in the discussion.

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen, if I interfere, but it is in the general interest; before the rehearsals commenced, I happened one evening to be at Belleville, and there I heard a little girl recite the rôle of *Margaret of Burgundy* with so much intelligence, and aptitude, that just now, when I saw the failure of Charlotte, I thought of that little girl. She would be just the one for you."

"Has she ever been on the stage?"

"I don't know. It was in the corridor of the theatre that I heard her. She sells cakes during the intermissions; but there is no question about her cleverness."

"Look here, Bidache," said the manager, "you are not on in the second act; change your clothes, take a cab, go to Belleville, and bring the little girl here. We can hear what she has to say during the intermission, and try her this very evening."

"I will go at once, Monsieur. But," remembering what had brought him there, "you will think about my costume?"

"Yes, my friend, yes."

"The cloak is too long—much too long. If it were shorter, every time that I turn I could produce a comic effect."

"That is an excellent idea," said one of the three authors, gravely.

"Is it not, Monsieur? And then, you know, I must have some sort of business to depend upon, for my part, in itself, is not funny."

"Not funny, your part? Not funny?"

"Now, don't quarrel," said the manager. "Keep your temper. Go, Bidache, go!"

Half an hour afterward, Bidache reached Belleville. They were playing "Lazarus the Shepherd," and the third act was about to begin.

"I would like," said Bidache to the doorkeeper, "to speak to that little girl who sells cakes during the intermissions."

"Criquette? She is in the gallery, listening to the play. Don't take the trouble to go up, Monsieur Bidache! I will send an usher for her."

The doorkeeper had the deepest respect for Bidache, who had filled the house the night he had deigned to play at Belleville.

In a few minutes Criquette appeared, followed by Pascal.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"Here is Monsieur Bidache, who wants to speak to you."

The two children regarded Bidache with admiring awe. An actor—an actor from Paris!

Bidache led Criquette a little aside into the vestibule, and said to her:

"Would you like to act a child's part in a play?"

"Upon a stage—upon a real stage?"

"Yes; at the Porte-Saint-Martin."

"The Porte-Saint-Martin? That is a big theatre, isn't it?"

"A very big theatre."

"In Paris?"

"Yes, in Paris."

"And there will be a part for Pascal, too? Here is Pascal—you remember him, don't you? He acted *Buridan* the other evening; and he acts better than I—much better than I. It was he who taught me all I know. There must be a part for Pascal."

"We will try to find something for him; but you are the one I came for. Do you want to take the part, or don't you?"

"Yes! yes!" cried Pascal, excitedly. "Of course she does—of course she does!"

"Then I will take her to the manager at once."

"At once!" exclaimed Criquette. "And what will become of our cakes?"

"Oh, you will be paid for your cakes. Come! Come!"

"Not without Pascal! I will never go without Pascal!"

"Is he your brother?"

"Not really, but just like one."

"Well, I'll take him, too. Come, both of you."

The doorkeeper looked on in amazement at this summary carrying off of Criquette by Bidache. The cab drove rapidly toward Paris, and at last landed the two children in the Rue de Bondy, before the stage door of the Porte-Saint-Martin.

They mounted the dark, winding staircase which led to the theatre proper. Bidache pushed open with his foot an old canvas-covered door, which was half off its hinges and gradually falling to pieces. Suddenly, the children perceived the immense stage of the Porte-Saint-Martin. They stopped short in amazement and delight. "Go on! Go on!" said Bidache; and with a sort of terror and religious awe they approached the side scenes.

However, Criquette and Pascal were already in a certain sense *professionals*. Now and then they had wandered about behind the scenes of the Belleville theatre, and talked with the actors who amused themselves by teaching them the terms and slang of the stage. But what was that poor little suburban play-house in comparison with this vast and magnificent theatre, ablaze with millions of gas-jets, and resounding with a grand, heroic march, played by a band stationed upon the stage?

It was the close of the second act. Laboriously, and jerkily, a huge platform rose through a trap-door in the stage, laden with garlands of scantily clothed women, supposed to represent flowers; and who were fastened to the branches by iron bands. Stiff, cramped, and jolted by the irregular movement of the ascent, they were forced to conceal their discomfort, smile idiotically, and wave their arms about with meaningless gestures. From the flies descended at the same time an immense cluster of women, with

even less drapery, who, beneath the glare of the electric light, moved down to meet their comrades. You could hear the grinding of the windlasses and the creaking of the ropes. The flooring of the stage shook, and the whole building trembled slightly. Now and then one of the poor girls uttered a little cry of alarm. "Don't be afraid! It's all right—there's no danger!" called out the head machinist, he himself turning a little pale, however. Louder and faster played the band. Bengal lights flashed their green and red flames on all sides, and enveloped the two children as in the glare of a conflagration. Revolving suns with glittering rays whirled on the stage behind the garlands of women as they hung grouped in space. And the big red curtain fell slowly, slowly, slowly, so as to prolong as much as possible the bewildering spectacle. This transformation scene was the glory of the piece.

Criquette was wild with excitement. At the first flash of the Bengal lights, she seized Pascal's hand and held on to it until the fall of the curtain, digging her little nails into his flesh in her admiration. Pascal, however, felt nothing, and it was not until the next day that he found in the palm of his hand, and laughingly showed to Criquette, "the marks of her claws."

The act had gone well. The fifteen journalists had been greatly pleased with the transformation scene, and the three authors had entirely recovered their good humor. After the act was over, when they came behind the scenes with the man-

ager, they found Bidache waiting for them, full of pride at the success of his expedition.

"Here she is," he said, presenting Criquette. "I must go and dress! I have only just time; but you will remember my costume?"

"Of course! of course!"

At the very first glance, Criquette captured the hearts of her judges. One thing struck them immediately: the bright intelligence of her expression. "Your face is all eyes," Pascal said to her one day. And it was true. Criquette's beauty was all in her eyes—in her tender, shining eyes—which spoke, smiled with her lips, and gave soul and life to her whole countenance.

"Well, so you wish to act, do you?" said the manager.

"Oh, yes, Monsieur; yes, indeed."

Her voice trembled, and she clutched Pascal's hand, which she still held.

"Are you afraid already?"

"It isn't that, Monsieur, but what I saw just now was so beautiful—so beautiful! I can not forget it."

The manager turned to the authors.

"Shall we go to the green-room now, during this intermission, and see what she can do?"

"Yes, of course."

"Send to the green-room," said the manager to the prompter, "little Edouard, the two ambassadors, and come yourself with the prompt-copy."

In a few minutes they were all gathered together in the green-room, and Mademoiselle

Rosita, the leading actress of the extravaganza, with a fur cloak thrown over her stage costume, came, out of curiosity, to witness the rehearsal.

"Now, pay attention," said the manager to Criquette, "and I will explain to you the scene. You have only one speech to make, but it must be spoken well; and then there are many things to be done in pantomime. You are the daughter of a great king, who is very powerful and very rich. You are called the *Princess Colibri*. You make your entrance preceded by a brilliant procession of lords, soldiers, and attendants. You wear a beautiful dress, all of gold, with a crown on your head, like a queen, and a splendid mantle of velvet with a long train. There will be two little negroes behind you to carry your train. You descend from your carriage—a little carriage where you sit all alone, drawn by four little white ponies—you descend with an air of haughtiness, pride, and dignity. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, Monsieur. Go on! Go on!"

"There are, on the stage, two rows of noblemen, who bow before you very low—very low. You give them your hand to kiss, but only the tips of your fingers, and you pass by them almost without glancing at them, with your grand air still; in fact the grander air you assume, the more effective it will be, because of what follows. You stop five or six steps from the place where that line of gas-jets is, and there Monsieur—you see that gentleman in a red dress—Monsieur says to

you, 'Princess, this is the young prince, your betrothed.' You look at the young prince, that little fellow there—he is not handsome, with his red hair, his parrot nose, and the hump on his back—you look at him and you say—"

Then the manager stopped, and turning to the prompter, said:

"Lombard, give her the exact words."

And the prompter, an old man with eye-glasses and a patriarchal air—it was said in the theatre that he had been a sub-prefect during the Hundred Days—the prompter, in a deep, sepulchral voice, read the following sentence:

"Ah! bah! he is too ugly. I won't have such a clown as that!"

"That is all," said the manager. "Can you remember that speech, or do you want it written on a piece of paper?"

"It isn't worth while. I shall remember."

And slowly, without emphasis or expression, Criquette, to fix the words in her memory, repeated them softly to herself.

"Ah! bah! he is too ugly. I won't have such a clown as that!"

Then, addressing the manager, she said:

"I know them now. Is there anything else?"

"Yes; one thing more. As you finish that speech, and in order that it may have more effect, you swing about and give a disdainful kick of your train, with a little gesture, not too much. Do you understand?"

"Yes; vulgar, without really being so."

This was said so simply and naturally that they all stared in surprise.

"Ah!" exclaimed the manager, "she will suit. Let us commence. Let us commence at once. Go there, to the other end of the room. These three gentlemen will have the kindness to represent the noblemen. You find them at your right, as you descend from the carriage, and you hold out to them your hand. There, now. You descend—"

"Oh, don't tell it to me again; I understand."

Then Criquette, with imperturbable dignity, rehearsed the whole scene—haughty, cold, disdainful, insolent—receiving from the height of her grandeur the congratulations of the three noblemen, and scarcely allowing them to brush the tips of her fingers with their lips. She walked down to the little prince; and while the ambassador spoke, she regarded her betrothed fixedly, without a gesture, without a movement, and, finally, at the exact moment when the speech was to be made, she burst out with: "Ah! bah!" etc., with such vivacity, and such drollness, that all, beginning with the old prompter, laughed heartily.

As for the kick, that was a masterpiece. As she kicked her train, the right arm of the *Princess Colibri*, with a marvelous meaning in the gesture, performed the most expressive pantomime. Then, by one of those instinctive movements which show a nature made for the stage, Criquette turned her back and hurriedly marched to the other end of the room, her arms in the air, all

trembling with fury and indignation. A great actress could not have done better.

The three authors were in transports.

"Try to do just the same on the stage," said the manager.

"Oh! I shall."

"You must rehearse at once upon the stage."

"You are a love, do you know it?" said Rosita, kissing Criquette in a burst of enthusiasm; "a real love! Come to my dressing-room during the next intermission and I will give you some bonbons."

An hour afterward, on the stage, at the end of the third act, it was quite another thing. The costumer had tried to dress Criquette in the gown of the *Princess Colibri*, but Criquette was much smaller and thinner than Charlotte. The dress hung all about her, a shapeless mass; so the costumer had to be satisfied with placing upon her head the jeweled crown, and attaching the big mantle by two clasps to her back. The effect was very odd when Criquette appeared, the last in the gorgeous procession, with her train of red velvet, lined with white satin, over her shabby dress of well-worn black alpaca, and beneath, her heavy shoes, all white with the dust of Belleville.

The three authors were uneasy. "Never," they said to themselves, "will she do as well as she did at first." They were wrong to be alarmed, however. Criquette surpassed herself; she repeated all her effects with astonishing precision,

spoke the speech with the same confidence, and gave the kick with the same gusto; but there was also a new effect, unexpected, irresistible, startling.

When Criquette in exasperation turned to dash up the stage, she dragged violently along the two little negroes, who, not expecting anything of the sort—this business was entirely Criquette's own creation—were surprised at the sudden movement of the Princess, and fell flat upon their noses.

The spectators were wildly enthusiastic. The fifteen journalists applauded with might and main. The mothers of the ballet-girls, crowded together at the end of the auditorium, doubled over with laughter. The musicians of the orchestra stamped their feet. The three authors with one accord, which rarely happened, exclaimed:

"That is excellent! The two little negroes thrown down! We must keep that! They must fall every evening."

But the poor little things were hurt; not much, but a little, and they began to yell lustily; at which all the journalists, the mothers of the ballet-girls, and the musicians laughed all the louder. Then one of the three authors said:

"The little negroes must not cry; it is too sad."

"Yes," said another, "it is very funny. They must cry."

A violent discussion now broke out between the two. The third author was undecided.

"I don't know," he said, "whether they ought to cry or not; there are reasons for and there are reasons against it."

"There is no need for them to cry," said the manager. "They cried well to-night, because they were hurt, but to-morrow they will not be hurt, and they will not cry well."

While this grave debate was going on, all the people on the stage tendered Criquette an ovation. Rosita was wild with enthusiasm.

"Don't forget," she said to Criquette, "to come soon to my dressing-room for your bon-bons."

"No, Madame, I will not forget."

But Criquette was looking for Pascal in the crowd. Was he satisfied with her? That is what she wanted to know. She perceived him at last, and, running to him, said:

"Were you in front?"

"Yes."

"Did I do well? Tell me!"

"Yes, indeed. You must ask a big price from the manager."

"Oh! not too much! not too much! Suppose he should be angry! And it is so nice to act—so nice—so nice!"

"Don't be afraid. It will be all right. Everybody about me was saying, 'She is worth money! She is worth money!' There is the manager. Leave me to arrange it. He must give you a lot of money."

The manager took the two children into his

office, and said to Criquette, who was still arrayed in her royal crown and her long train:

"You were very good, my child, and you shall play the part. Have you a father living?"

"No, Monsieur, papa is dead."

"And your mother?"

"Yes, I have mamma."

"But her mamma," interrupted Pascal, "her mamma does not bother about any of these things. Criquette and I for a long time have managed our own business. We have treated directly with the pastry-cook for the cakes."

"Oh! you have treated directly," laughed the manager; "but, nevertheless, her mamma must sign the contract, if I engage her."

"Oh! Mamma Brinquart will sign anything we want, with closed eyes. I will explain to you the situation. Criquette and I are partners in the sale of cakes at the Belleville theatre, and, by the way, we have lost at least twenty francs worth of cakes to-night."

"I will give you your twenty francs."

"We make money, a good deal of money. So, if you want to engage Criquette, Monsieur, you must pay for her. She can not come here for less than—for less than—"

Pascal paused. He recoiled before the enormity of the sum.

"For less than?"

"For less than ten francs a night."

"Well, I don't wish to beat you down. I will give her ten francs every evening, so long as we play the piece."

"Very well, Monsieur, very well."

"No, it isn't very well, Pascal. You must not go too quickly. I can not come here alone. We always go together, Pascal and I."

"Well, I'll engage him, also. I will let him play a monkey in the second act."

"At ten francs a night?"

"Oh, no! The monkeys have only fifteen sous."

"I receive ten francs, and he fifteen sous!" exclaimed Criquette; "that isn't fair."

"We must be reasonable," said Pascal; "the monkeys are probably silent parts."

"Yes, exactly."

"It is agreed, Monsieur; Criquette, ten francs, and I a monkey at fifteen sous."

"But, Pascal, you know we always share. You must take half of my ten francs, and I will take half of your fifteen sous."

After these generous words, the manager dismissed them. He had no more need of Criquette to-night—the little Princess simply appeared, without saying a word, in the last act. The rehearsal would last till very late, and he advised Criquette to go to bed as soon as possible and sleep well, in order not to be fatigued the next day. She must come to the theatre at noon, with her mother, to sign the contract, after which she could rehearse all the afternoon the two little scenes of the first and second acts.

"And shall I also sign my contract to-morrow?" asked Pascal.

"Oh, it is not worth while for you; there is no contract for the monkeys."

As they were about to go, the manager stopped them and said to Criquette:

"I forgot to ask you your name."

"Céline Brinquart."

"A poor name for the stage."

"But that is not what I am usually called. Everyone calls me Criquette."

"Criquette. That is very pretty. We will put on the programme: *Little Criquette.*"

"Upon the programme! I shall be upon the programme?"

"To-morrow."

"Ah! Pascal, I shall be upon the programme to-morrow! Upon the programme!"

And she flew, dancing with joy, from the room. The costumer relieved her of her crown and train. Her dear crown! Her dear train!

"Ah!" she said, "I wish I could carry them home, and take them to bed with me, and sleep with them!"

As they were about to leave the theatre, she remembered that a beautiful lady, all covered with diamonds, had promised her some bonbons. She asked the way to Mademoiselle Rosita's dressing-room, and the two children were shown into a very pretty little room, all hung with yellow cretonne with big red flowers stamped upon it.

Rosita was not alone; a man was there, seated upon a little sofa in a corner of the room—a man

in evening dress with his hat on his head, tall, a powerful figure, a ruddy face, with long mustache and side-whiskers, slightly gray. He was a Russian of lofty birth and immense fortune, Prince André Savéline.

"Oh! Prince," cried Rosita, "there she is, that little wonder! Come in, my love, come in; and here are your bonbons! and here! and here!"

As she spoke, she placed three boxes of candied fruits in Criquette's arms.

"How sorry I am, Prince, that you did not see her. She was marvelous! It was all the fault of those three miserable authors, who would not allow you to go in front; but you can be sure that such a thing shall not happen again. In my next contract, I shall have the following article inserted: 'The Prince shall have the right to be present at all the dress rehearsals.' Good night, my little angel; come here till I kiss you; and you kiss her, too, Prince. Good night! Good night!"

"Let us go and eat some of the bonbons," said Criquette to Pascal, when they were alone behind the scenes.

"Yes, indeed," rejoined Pascal.

They had become children again. But, suddenly, they heard stifled sobs. A little girl was weeping, seated at the foot of a flight of stairs, with her head in her hands.

"What is the matter? What are you crying about?" asked Criquette.

The little girl raised her head and looked at Criquette; her grief burst forth with redoubled

violence, and, in the midst of her tears, she faltered:

"I am crying—because—because—because you have taken—my part—away from me."

"Oh! you are Charlotte. It is not my fault. You must not be angry with me. Come, don't cry any more."

Charlotte had risen, and was trying to escape, not wishing to be touched by Criquette.

"No, don't cry. Listen a minute. It is not right that I should have all—the part and the bonbons. Here, take the bonbons."

She placed the three boxes in her arms, and ran away, calling:

"Come, Pascal, come!"

A few minutes afterward, they were walking side by side along the boulevard, in the direction of Belleville, when suddenly Criquette said:

"It was a prince who kissed me just now. I have never been kissed by a prince before. His mustache pricked me. Princes are great men. In what piece, Pascal, is there a prince?"

"In 'The Mysteries of Paris'—*Prince Rudolphe.*"

III.

Criquette's début was an astounding success, and the newspapers vied with each other in her praise. An illustrated journal published a portrait of the *Princess Colibri* in the performance of the now famous kick. That kick! It set the audience on fire the evening of the first representation. One cry went up from all throats: *Bis! Bis! Bis!* It was an outburst of spontaneous, irresistible enthusiasm. Criquette, half-bewildered by the applause, did not know what to do. She watched the clapping of that multitude of hands, and then she heard from the side-scenes voices calling to her: "Repeat it!" "No! don't repeat it!"

Fresh dissensions were torturing the three authors of "Gri-Gri."

"She must not repeat it! She must not repeat it!" exclaimed the first. "It would kill the situation. The piece is ruined if that scene is repeated."

"Pooh! The public demand it!" said the second.

"Let her do it over again. An effect is always an effect."

The third author was in a quandary. He bit his mustache, and murmured:

"There are reasons for and there are reasons against it."

But the public demanded the repetition of the kick so persistently, that Criquette was forced to go through with the scene and the business once more. The same enthusiasm was again aroused. Enormous bunches of roses and white lilacs fell at the feet of the little actress. The gallery gods threw oranges, which fell in the orchestra upon the terrified musicians, who tried to shield themselves from the avalanche beneath their music-racks.

This repetition of a kick was an event without precedent in the history of the French theatre. It was the occasion of a bitter war in the press. The critics were divided into camps; one party full of indulgence, and the other pitiless in its denunciation.

"See what we have come to!" said the adherents of the latter party. "A kick is encored upon that stage where once were fought the grand battles of romanticism!"

Scarcely had the curtain fallen, when Criquette, escaping from all the hands which were stretched out to detain her, pushed her way through the crowds of lords and ladies, and threw herself into the arms of a hideous yellow monkey, who was standing piteously behind the scenes, with his head buried in his hands.

"Kiss me, Pascal! Kiss me! I am so happy —so happy!"

But, in her kind little heart, a little sadness was soon mingled with her joy; and turning to one of the authors who happened to be standing near, she said:

"Ah! Monsieur, promise me that in your next piece there will be a part for him—not a monkey, you know, but a real part."

Madame Brinquart had come to the theatre, and had witnessed from the front of the house Criquette's startling success. When she returned to Belleville with the two children after the performance, she was obliged to take a cab; for never could the three on foot have carried the enormous mass of flowers, bonbons, oranges, and cakes with which Criquette's dressing-room was packed. She could, however, afford this unheard-of expense; for, after the third act, the manager had presented to Criquette a hundred-franc note! Since the death of her husband, Madame Brinquart had not held in her hands a hundred-franc note.

It was two o'clock in the morning when the mother and daughter entered their wretched lodging in the Rue de Tourtille. Two garret chambers, with whitewashed walls, a brick floor which crumbled beneath the feet, and two rickety, dusty sky-lights, through which a ray of sunshine was never known to penetrate.

But to-night hope was a guest in this squalid place, and in Criquette's dreams unwound again the procession of *Princess Colibri*. Her rest was broken; she threw off the coarse coverlet of her bed and murmured, in a sleepy voice: "Ah! bah! he is too ugly! I won't have such a clown!" And raising her little naked foot, she drowsily repeated the kick which had given her

that moment of triumph, so hard to obtain, in most cases, a second time.

The next day about noon Pascal arrived. He brought a paper which already spoke of Criquette. After the young lady had regaled herself with her first notice, she said, assuming a very grave, important air:

"Let us sit down and talk a little. I did not sleep much last night, and so I had time to think. In the first place, mamma, now that I am making ten francs a day, I don't want you to get up in the dark mornings and go to the market. The day for selling apples and flowers is past; there is no use in worrying yourself about that any more. You are not well, and you have been coughing for the last week. I heard you last night. You must not do anything more, nothing at all except look after the little household of us three."

"Us three?" said Pascal.

"Yes, us three, Pascal, because the manager said to me last night—he said: 'Now that you are an actress and are on the stage, and you make so much money, you must not run about in Belleville with cakes and taffy. You must rest during the day, so as not to be tired in the evening.'"

"Yes, you can with your ten francs; but I, with my fifteen sous—"

"It is not ten francs, nor fifteen sous either; it is ten francs, fifteen sous. What is mine is yours, Pascal."

"No, Criquette, no!"

"And your hundred sous—this winter—your hundred sous! Didn't I take them every Saturday? I did not want to at first, but you explained to me that I must take them, and so I did. And it's just the same thing now! You are going to leave your employer to-morrow; I arranged all that in my head last night. You must hire a room in this house. There is one to let on the other side of the entry. The hundred francs the manager gave us last night ought to be enough to furnish it for you. It will be, won't it, mamma? And we will live together, all three of us. Mamma will have two children to take care of her. Now, don't be naughty, Pascal, and make up such cross faces. I won't love you, if you don't want me to; and yet, I don't know how I could help loving you."

Pascal finally agreed to the proposition, and things were arranged as Criquette had suggested. Two months passed away. The spectacle was a great success, a success to which Criquette contributed her share. Her photograph, with the two little negroes behind, bearing her train, was sold in all the shops.

Criquette had become a person of no little importance in the theatre. Rosita made a great pet of her, took her to her dressing-room every evening after the second act, and loaded her with fruit and bonbons. Criquette usually found there a very numerous and brilliant company. It was like a little club. Usually about ten o'clock the Prince appeared, accompanied by two or three of

his friends. The gentlemen sat down in the dressing-room with the hair-dresser, the maid, etc., and all on a footing of the utmost equality. Bidache came very regularly since the evening Rosita had said to him:

"Bidache, the Prince likes you very much. I dined with him to-night at the Café Anglais, and this is what he said—exactly what he said: 'That Bidache is very amusing, and there is frequently much sense in what he says.'"

Highly flattered, Bidache had become a constant visitor to Rosita's dressing-room. The Prince complacently made room for him by his side upon a very narrow divan between the window and the toilet-table, and there they would sit, the Prince and Bidache, squeezed against one another, and scarcely able to breathe in the asphyxiating heat of the room. Above their heads were hung the tulle skirts of Rosita, and the thin fabric brushed the Prince's fair hair and Bidache's flame-colored wig. The dresser was sometimes obliged to interrupt the conversation of Bidache and the Prince. With an "Excuse me, gentlemen," she would step up on the end of the divan and carefully unhook the skirts desired. For some moments, then, the Prince and the comedian would disappear, inundated, submerged beneath a cascade of perfumed lace. One evening Bidache's wig was carried away by the avalanche, and the Prince had the exquisite kindness to recover it, and with his own hands replace it on the head of the comedian, who, confused and delighted, repeated again and again:

"Oh, Prince! Oh, Prince!"

And then the conversation which this episode had interrupted was resumed.

"What were we talking about? Oh, of that very funny conundrum you invented yesterday. Tell it to me."

"It is such a trifle, Prince."

"Tell it to me, please. I am very fond of your conundrums. They are not like those we hear every day."

"You are too good, Prince. Well, this was it. I asked the Duke of Landry-Raton what was the warmest letter in the alphabet."

"The warmest letter?"

"Of course he could not guess. Then I told him: 'A, because it is in the middle of flame.'"

"In the middle of flame?"

The Prince did not understand. The workings of his mind were a little slow.

"Yes, Prince. F-l-a-m-e—a in the middle of flame."

"Oh, yes, I see. Charming! charming!"

The conversation then took a graver turn, and Bidache showed his *serious side.* They discussed politics.

"France," said the Prince, "will never become France again, and recover her former position, except by the return of the legitimate monarchy and the entrance of its king."

"I am grieved, Prince, not to share your opinion, but, next to the empire, I believe in the republic."

"So do I," growled the hair-dresser, his comb between his teeth.

The hair-dresser, Michel Grandin, a dried-up little man of about fifty years, with an intelligent face, had been prominent in a barricade fight in December, 1851, and had been transported to Lambessa. Six months after, he obtained his pardon, without having solicited it himself, at the request of a Senator who could refuse nothing to Rosita. Michel at first declared squarely that he would not leave Lambessa, not knowing whence this shameful pardon had come to him; but he ended by yielding to the entreaties of Rosita, who wrote to him:

Michel, my dear, accept. I don't know what to do without you. There is no one in Paris who knows how to dress my hair; besides, you owe no gratitude to the President. It is not Bonaparte who pardons you; it is I.

To and fro in the dressing-room, with calm and measured step, went and came a woman of an uncertain age, tall, spare, and dark, who appeared to see nothing, hear nothing, understand nothing, and yet who was the first to see, hear, and understand all. This was Mademoiselle Aurélie, Rosita's maid. Her jet-black hair was arranged in two flat, shining bands. Her dress of a dark color was very simple, well made, and without ornament. She wore a linen collar and cuffs of a dazzling whiteness and stiff with starch. In Mademoiselle Aurélie's manners, movements, and dress there was something that recalled the clois-

ter. She watched everything with a keen eye, and when anything did not go according to her taste, when Rosita's friends appeared to her too noisy, from her thin, colorless lips, upon which a smile never appeared, would issue short, biting sentences:

"The gentlemen prevent Madame from dressing."

"The gentlemen will make Madame late for her change."

"Madame will miss her entrance, as she did last week."

"I shall be obliged to send the gentlemen away."

The gentlemen then respectfully drew back into their corner, making themselves as small as possible, fearing to be turned out, which had happened to them more than once. Rosita herself obeyed in the most docile manner, never revolting against Aurélie's authority—she who passed her life in perpetual imprecations against costumes, stage-managers, and authors.

Then, when all was in order, Mademoiselle Aurélie would sit down upon a stool in a corner of the room, open Rosita's jewel-case, and, with a slow and regular motion, begin to polish the two hundred thousand francs' worth of diamonds, which she carried herself every evening to the theatre, and would entrust to no one, not even to her mistress.

It was to this dressing-room of Rosita's that Criquette came every evening to take lessons in

Parisian elegance and corruption. She made rapid progress and soon caught the tone and manners of the place. They all smiled at her prettiness and grace, and the fun and assurance of her chatter. She had a way of saying "Good evening, Prince," which highly amused them all; and she received with imperturbable dignity his highness' reply: "Good evening, Princess."

Mademoiselle Aurélie was the only one who accorded no attention to Criquette; she had even two or three times sent her away somewhat roughly. Slight expressions of annoyance, very quickly suppressed, contracted Mademoiselle Aurélie's enigmatical, passive face when all in the dressing-room amused themselves by exciting Criquette, and making her say funny things.

One evening even, when the Prince had made a speech which possessed less wit than coarseness, Aurélie could not contain herself, and suddenly interrupting him, she said, dryly:

"The Prince ought not to say such things before that child."

There was a moment of amazed silence, and Rosita was about to intervene, but the Prince did not give her time.

"You are right, Aurélie," he said, "and I was wrong."

Such were Criquette's evenings, and in such familiarity did the daughter of the Belleville apple-woman live with the most brilliant and most useless portion of society.

Very different were her mornings. Her mother

grew feebler day by day, and now she could not even go out for the provisions of the day. About nine o'clock Criquette herself went to the baker's and the dairy. Pascal would gladly have spared her that trouble, but his mornings were no longer his own. Intelligent, active, and impatient to render himself useful, he had been able to gain the good graces of the stage-manager, and he now served as aid to the messenger of the theatre. He carried every morning half the notices for rehearsals; twenty-five sous had been added to his monkey-salary of fifteen sous; so he now received forty sous a day; quite a respectable sum.

Often in the morning, with a big loaf of bread under her arm, a pitcher of milk in one hand, and a sou's worth of liver for her cat in the other, with her stuff dress buttoned awry, her hair mussed and tumbled, her eyes still heavy with sleep, her shoes unlaced, Criquette would stop in the Rue de Paris before the window of a stationer, where were exposed for sale photographs of the *Princess Colibri* in the costume of the last scene, a brilliant costume, all of gold and silver gauze with a blazing star upon the head. She found consolation for her shabbiness of the morning in her magnificence of the evening.

But nothing could console Criquette for her mother's illness. The last days of May had come, and the poor woman could only with the greatest difficulty drag herself in the afternoon to a bench in the shade of the sorry-looking trees of the outer boulevard. She was so weak and worn-

out when she returned, that in mounting the five flights of stairs she was obliged to stop on each landing and lean, breathless, against the wall.

The two children were her constant companions, and when they were all three seated on the boulevard, Criquette made an effort to distract and cheer her mother.

"I am going to tell you all about the theatre. If you only knew, Mamma, how well the play is doing—six thousand francs every evening. They could not make more. You ought to see the crowd of people waiting to buy tickets when Pascal and I reach the theatre. The line stretches way into the Rue de Bondy. The piece will run two hundred nights at least, perhaps three hundred. And I shall have my ten francs all the time, and a hundred-franc note besides, if I do not miss a night before the hundredth. The manager told me so, and I shall not miss one. After "Gri-Gri," they will play another piece, a drama full of blood, and Pascal and I will both have parts. The manager told me that, too. The manager likes me; he never meets me without stopping to speak to me. And Mademoiselle Rosita likes me ever so much, too. You know—you have seen the piece—the tall blonde who plays the fairy that is always angry. In the month of July we will take another apartment, Madame Durand's, the vest-maker's. She is going away. Then you will have a big room, looking out on the street, with a fire-place, and there will be a fire all the winter there, a blazing fire. And

then, when Pascal has a part, we shall make not twelve francs, but twenty. · We will lay some money aside, and after the winter is over, when the fine weather comes, we will go to the country, all three of us. You will see the flowers and trees, and it will do you good, Mamma, and you will not cough any more, and you will get well. Promise me that you will get well, Mamma, and a little smile for Criquette. Say, will you?"

Criquette embraced the poor woman, who smiled, softly lulled by these dreams of the future. She was dying, but she did not realize it. That is a mercy God grants to consumptives.

On the 30th of May, when Madame Brinquart tried to rise, she fell back in a fainting-fit, motionless, and white as wax. Pascal hastened for a physician. When the latter arrived the faintness had passed away. The invalid complained only of great weakness. The doctor made an examination.

"She must remain in bed, and she must not speak. She needs strength. Give her plenty of nourishing food, milk, and soup."

Going down the stairs, the charcoal-woman, who had been present during his call, said to him:

"Well, doctor?"

"She is doomed. I can do nothing."

The next four days were peaceful enough. The poor woman began to smile again, and to hope. The two children passed the day with her, and, in the evening, when they were obliged to go to

the theatre, the charcoal-woman took their place, and sat near the bed with her work.

On Monday, the fourth of June, at eight o'clock, the stage-manager and call-boys of the Porte-Saint-Martin were in a state of great excitement. They skurried about behind the scenes, entered all the dressing-rooms, and everywhere asked the same question:

"Have you seen Criquette?"

No one had seen Criquette.

"And Pascal?"

No one had seen Pascal.

It was the eightieth representation of "Gri-Gri." They were already a quarter of an hour late in beginning; the audience was commencing to be impatient, and Criquette was in the third scene of the first act, ten minutes after the rising of the curtain. What was to be done? Charlotte was not there; she knew the part and might at a pinch have taken Criquette's place.

The stage-manager went down to the sidewalk opposite the stage entrance on the Rue de Bondy, and saw Criquette alone come running toward him.

"Tell them to commence," he cried to one of the call-boys. "In ten minutes she will be ready. I will set two women to dress her." Then, as Criquette reached him:

"Hurry! Hurry, you naughty girl!" he said.

"Ah, Monsieur, do not scold me. It is mamma. She has been spitting blood all day and she is ill, very ill."

Out of breath with her long run, and at the end of her strength, Criquette threw herself into the arms of the stage-manager, and burst into tears.

"I am not going to scold you, my poor child. You are a good little girl and always very prompt; but it is the audience, you know. Come, come quickly; and don't cry any more. Your mamma will be better when you return. How old is she?"

"Not thirty."

"Oh, at that age it is not hard to get well. Come, come!"

As he spoke he hurried her up the steps. They had commenced. The orchestra was playing the overture. Two dressers seized Criquette. She allowed them to undress and dress her like a doll. In a twinkling her poor garments, almost snatched off her body, lay scattered all about on the floor. The stage-manager had remained to hurry the dressers.

Over Criquette's bare shoulders they passed a chemisette adorned with lace, while the hair-dresser placed on her head a curly, yellow wig crowned with rosebuds. And Criquette, passed from hand to hand, continued to speak broken words to the stage-manager.

"Ah, Monsieur, I forgot to tell you; you will excuse Pascal. He staid behind with mamma."

"All right, my child, all right."

"You will not discharge him?"

"No, no, my child; have no fear, have no fear."

"As there are ten monkeys in the scene of the monkeys, I thought that one monkey more or less would not make much difference. I came because I had a part, and it would have put you in a fix, and then, besides, because the manager told me that if I did not miss a night before the hundredth, I should have a hundred francs, and that will be very useful to us if mamma is sick a long time."

The voice of the call-boy was heard:

"*Colibri! Colibri* is called!"

"You hear?" said the stage-manager to the dressers.

"She is ready, Monsieur, all ready. Just a pin here. So! You can take her."

The stage-manager almost carried Criquette to the proper entrance, and a few minutes after pushed her upon the stage.

"Go, my child, go. That is your cue."

He was a little uneasy, and he watched Criquette through an opening in the scenery.

"Poor little thing! How I have knocked her about!"

But Criquette, although breathing hard, recovered her courage in the presence of the audience, and spoke in a clear enough voice the ten or twelve speeches of the scene of the first act.

When she left the stage she found Rosita waiting for her.

"My angel, my little angel, do not worry; I have sent Aurélie to your mamma, with the doctor of the theatre. Aurélie will see if she wants

anything, and will bring us news of her. It will be good news; don't cry."

Aurélie returned in about two hours with the doctor. The news was not good, far from it.

"I think that she will survive the night," said the doctor; "but before to-morrow evening she will die."

The news soon spread behind the scenes, and all hearts were sorry for Criquette, whom everyone loved. She was so good and sweet. The week before, a machinist had been killed by a fall from the flies, and Criquette had taken up a collection.

"Give," she said, "give something for his poor wife, who will be left all alone."

The poor little girl herself would now be left all alone. Five or six machinists, grouped on the stage behind the curtain, were talking in a low voice. A fireman was listening to them.

"We must take up a collection to-morrow to bury Criquette's mother," said one of the machinists.

"Yes, yes," responded his comrades.

"Criquette?" asked the fireman. "Is not that the little girl who is so funny, and who made me laugh so much one evening when I watched her from the side-scenes?"

"Yes."

"And her mother is dead?"

"No; but she can not live through the night."

Then the fireman, producing an old, dilapidated pocket-book, said:

"Here; I shall not be on service to-morrow night. Here are two sous for your collection."

Rosita, as she listened to Aurélie's recital, wept real tears. She had a very sincere affection for Criquette. Aurélie preserved her usual composure.

"Madame is all marked up," she said, "and will be obliged to make up her face again."

Aurélie had delivered her report in a calm, quiet voice, without the slightest appearance of emotion. When Criquette entered the dressing-room after the second act, crying, "Mamma? How is mamma?" Aurélie, in a few brief words, forced herself to reassure her. And when Rosita said to her, at the commencement of the fourth act:

"Aurélie, that child must not return to Belleville alone to-night. You must go with her, and, if it seems necessary to you, pass the night there."

"Very well, Madame," responded Aurélie, in the same tone in which she would have answered, "Very well, Madame," had Rosita said to her, "Go to-morrow to the Palais-Royal and procure me a box."

But Rosita, suddenly changing her mind, said:

"No; I will go myself. And yet, heaven knows how afraid I am of death! But I can not forsake the little girl. Yes, I will go. The Prince has gone to the Opera, and is to come to the house after it is over. Explain to him what has happened, and tell him to wait for me."

Again the same answer:

"Very well, Madame."

That is how, for the first time in her life, Criquette, at half after midnight, entered a little coupé, lined with cherry satin, upon the box of which sat an English coachman and a little groom in knee-breeches and top-boots.

IV.

Never, at a like hour, had Rosita's coachman ventured into such a quarter; but he was piloted by Célestin, the groom, a boy of Paris, born at Ménilmontant, and who knew the Rue de Tourtille. They approached the house, and Criquette, putting her head out of the window, cried:

"There it is! There to the left."

The coupé stopped. Two women were before the door, standing on the sidewalk of the black and deserted street—two working women who lived in the house. They had heard Criquette's voice.

"Is that you, Criquette?"

"Yes. And Mamma? Mamma?"

"Come quickly. She has been asking for you."

Criquette was out of the carriage in a moment, and, followed by one of the women, ran up the dark, unlighted stairs. The other woman, in astonishment, watched Rosita descend from the coupé. Rosita was very elegantly dressed in pearl-gray from head to foot; in her ears were two large pendants of diamonds, worth at least thirty thousand francs. She put them on every evening for the fourth act, and, in her hurry, she had forgotten to remove them.

"Where is it?" asked Rosita. "Show me the way."

"Do you wish to go up, Madame?"

"Yes, yes."

"The stairs are not lighted. We who are used to them know the way, but you will find it hard work."

"Célestin," said Rosita, "take a lantern from the carriage and lead the way."

They all three started up the stairs, which were wet and dirty; the day had been rainy. The groom mounted first, holding the lantern in both hands and walking sideways to light the way for his mistress. Then came Rosita, and finally the working-woman, who scrutinized the pearl-gray satin boots and pearl-gray silk stockings. She said to herself, "It must be one of the actresses from the theatre," and she protected with her hands Rosita's skirts, which were too voluminous for the narrow staircase.

The ascent was laborious, and they had not reached the first landing when Criquette rushed into her mother's room and threw herself down on the bed.

"Here I am! Mamma! Mamma! You are better. Tell me that you are better!"

The poor woman made an effort to raise herself; she seized Criquette and kissed her eagerly on the hair, on the cheeks, on the eyes, while with her thin hands she feverishly touched the child's arms, hands, shoulders, and neck, as if to take and carry away with her into the grave as much as possible.

And she repeated:

"My Criquette! my Criquette! I was so afraid not to see you again, and here you are. My Criquette! my Criquette!"

While speaking in a weak voice, she continued to cover Criquette's face with kisses. Bathed in an icy perspiration, feeling already the chill of death, she found a little life and heat upon Criquette's cheeks, which, burning and inflamed, were still covered with the rouge and powder of the theatre.

But the effort soon wearied her. Her arms fell down, she sighed deeply, and sunk back exhausted upon the pillows.

At this moment Rosita appeared. The groom remained upon the landing with his lantern, whose brilliant reflector threw into the chamber a very bright light, and made apparent the contrast between the poverty-stricken apartments and Rosita's costly costume.

"Come, Madame, come! She does not kiss me any more, she does not speak to me, she does not hear me!"

Pascal was weeping hot tears in a corner, and the charcoal-woman, standing at the head of the bed, was mopping her eyes with her handkerchief. For two hours she had been there, anxious and undecided. These words had come again and again, like a refrain from the lips of the dying woman:

"Criquette—my Criquette! all alone in the world, without anyone!"

The charcoal-woman said to herself: "We already have three children, who sleep crowded together in the back shop. Can they crowd a little more to make room for Criquette? Yes; but would my man like it, when I say to him to-morrow morning, Do you know, we have another child? I have taken the little girl from upstairs?"

The eyes of the dying woman reopened, and with a fixed gaze, not understanding, she regarded Rosita. What struck her especially was the glittering of the two ear-rings.

"Mamma," said Criquette, "it is Madame Rosita: you know—Madame Rosita, who gives me bonbons."

"Ah! is it you, Madame? Criquette has told me very often how good you were to her. Criquette, my poor Criquette, she is going to be alone, all alone."

Then Rosita, carried away by her emotion, with a most sincere and generous impulse, exclaimed: "No, not alone, not alone! Give her to me. I want her. I will take her!"

"You—ah!—you—my daughter. Yes—yes—I give her to you—thanks—thanks."

The words were articulated with difficulty. She had, however, strength enough to take both Rosita's ungloved hands, and, kissing them, she repeated:

"Thanks! Thanks!"

What struck her then were the rings which sparkled on Rosita's fingers. She did not question who this woman was, and what would be-

come of her child. She had only one idea in her weak, confused brain:

"This lady is rich, very rich, and she will take Criquette; and Criquette will be warmly clothed in winter, and in summer will play in the gardens under the big trees with the children of the rich. And Criquette will not be cold as I have been cold, nor hungry as I have been hungry."

So was settled the fate of this poor little thing, tossed about like a stray leaf in the whirlwind of the world. Her life would have been different, and better, perhaps, if the charcoal-woman had spoken first.

The dying woman released Rosita's hands, and groping blindly, for her eyes were growing dim, she murmured:

"Criquette, where are you, my child, and you, too, Pascal? They are so good, so kind—both. Thanks, Madame. Good-bye, Criquette—good-bye, good-bye!"

She died peacefully, without pain, her cheek pressed against Criquette's. There was no more a word, no more a movement, no more anything. It was finished. Everybody was weeping. Rosita had sunk down on her knees at the foot of the bed, and was trying to recall one of the prayers of her childhood; but she could remember only the first sentence.

The groom had advanced just across the threshold, the lantern in one hand, his hat in the other. He had never seen anyone die. He stood looking at the scene, his eyes round with fear and

curiosity. The silence, the tears, the lack of movement—this then was death!

Criquette felt her mother's arms fall away from her, inert and icy. She recoiled in terror.

"Ah, Mamma! Mamma! Speak to me! Speak to me!"

Then, glancing at those around her, she asked:

"Is she dead?"

No one replied.

"No, no! she is not dead! Mamma, it is I, Criquette. Speak, Mamma! say that you are not dead!"

A quarter of an hour afterward the poor child had to be taken from the room. She did not wish to go; she clung to the furniture, demanding to remain with her mother as long as she was there, and she could see her.

"I want to kiss her—once more—only once more—only once."

And her face, wet with tears, was pressed to the discolored lips of the dead. At last, however, she was obliged to allow Rosita to take her away; but just as they were going she exclaimed:

"Stay here, Pascal! Don't leave her, don't leave her!"

"No; I promise."

"Perhaps she is not dead!"

Her sobs broke out afresh as they descended the stairs. "Mamma! Mamma! I want to see mamma!" Doors on all the landings were opened, and the lodgers appeared, half-dressed, and asked Rosita:

"Is it all over upstairs?"

"Yes."

They watched Criquette descend.

"Poor little thing! Poor little thing!"

The groom, pale as a ghost, marched ahead with his lantern.

It was half-past two in the morning when the coupé rolled under the portico of a little hotel in the Rue Trudon. During the entire drive Criquette had not spoken a word. Rosita held the weeping child in her arms, and from time to time dried her eyes with a lace handkerchief, which soon became nothing more than a little wet ball.

A domestic in livery opened the door of a vestibule where flamed the gas-jets of two immense gilded candelabra. Aurélie had heard the carriage, and with an unruffled, tranquil air, she descended the staircase which, between two balustrades of green marble, led to the upper floor.

"Is it over?" she asked Rosita.

"Yes, it is over, and I have taken Criquette, and I shall keep her always."

"Always?"

"Yes; always! always! She is my child, my daughter."

Then, suddenly changing her tone, she asked:

"Is the Prince here?"

"Yes, Madame, in the smoking-room."

"Take Criquette to my room. I am going to speak to the Prince, and will be up in a moment."

"Very well, Madame."

Criquette was utterly exhausted, and she let them do with her as they pleased. She ascended the stairs, supported, almost carried, by Aurélie.

Rosita entered the smoking-room. The Prince was asleep in an arm-chair, with an extinguished cigar held between his fingers. The pages of a sporting journal lay scattered on the carpet. The noise of the opening door awoke him.

"Oh, here you are at last!" he said, as he saw Rosita.

"Yes."

"It must be late. I have been asleep. Well, how is that poor woman?"

"She died an hour ago in my arms. And do you know what I have done? Something that you will approve of, I am sure. I have taken Criquette."

"For to-night."

"No, forever."

"Forever?"

"Yes; she is upstairs, and I am obliged—"

"To send me away!"

"Yes. But come to-morrow morning before ten o'clock; you must attend to the funeral and the purchase of a lot in the cemetery. I will explain to you what I want."

"Can not Aurélie see to all that, my dear?"

"No, I shall need Aurélie for something else. Criquette has nothing to wear, and she must have a black dress for day after to-morrow. Aurélie will take her to my dressmaker's. Go, my friend, go, and come to-morrow."

"Yes, to-morrow morning."

"I have done right, have I not? Say that I have done right."

"Yes, certainly."

"Then kiss me for my good action."

He kissed her, lit a cigar in the vestibule, and walked slowly away along the Rue de Grammont.

Rosita ran quickly upstairs. As she opened the door of her room, she saw Aurélie coming toward her.

"Hush, Madame! She is worn out with fatigue. She fell like a log on that sofa, and at once was asleep."

"It is better to leave her there."

"I think so."

"But put one of my wraps over her so that she won't take cold."

"Very well, Madame."

While Aurélie was placing a shawl over Criquette, the child, opening her eyes, murmured:

"Mamma! Mamma!"

And she gazed sleepily up at the two gilded cupids which upheld the heavy curtains of blue brocade draped about Rosita's bed.

"Sleep, my child, sleep."

She fell asleep again, and the two women stood looking at her.

At the same moment the Prince was mounting the steps of one of the boulevard clubs, where every night a great Turkish lord, enormously rich, played piquet, and accepted all the bets offered him.

A game was just finished, and another was about to begin. Savéline said to the Turk:

"Will you take another bet?"

"With pleasure."

"A louis the point."

"Very well."

At four o'clock in the morning, the Prince left the club; he had won fifteen hundred points, that is, thirty thousand francs.

"Well," he thought to himself, "I shall have a good profit left after burying Criquette's mother. Rosita's good action has, perhaps, taken the spell off me. Before to-night I have had atrocious luck for six weeks."

The funeral took place the next day at eleven o'clock in the morning. Criquette, with Pascal, was the chief mourner. Then came Rosita and the charcoal-woman; then the manager and one of the authors, the one who usually represented the literary firm at interments; then the Prince and Bidache; then all the personnel of the theatre: artists, dancers, chorus, dressers, machinists.

While the procession was slowly ascending the Rue de Paris, the author spoke to the manager of Criquette.

"Poor little thing!" he said. "Poor little thing!" He repeated five or six times mechanically these words: "Poor little thing! Poor little thing!" Then, without any transition:

"When will she play again?"

V.

The next day at two o'clock Rosita went to see her man of business, whose name was Narcisse Plantin, and who was the son of a provincial lawyer. He had succeeded his father in 1847, and immediately admonitions and reprimands from the chamber of advocates inundated the office. Two years afterward, Plantin was forced to abandon the business. His career had been one long succession of questionable and illegal practices.

There was only one thing for him to do—to come to Paris, the natural refuge of all shady personages. He bought for ten thousand francs a business, the affairs of which were in a languishing condition. Plantin was active, intelligent, and audacious; he soon brought the business up, and increased its customers; and he sought these customers in the world devoted to pleasure; that is, in that society where flourished protests, injunctions, seizures, and sheriff's sales. The former lawyer was an expert in the art of unraveling his clients' affairs, unless it was for his interest to entangle them still more, in which case he did not hesitate to do so.

He had no longer anything to fear from the chamber of advocates, so he launched himself boldly into the most risky enterprises. There was, of course, the imperial prosecutor, who from

time to time summoned him before him; but from these trying interviews Plantin always departed without any serious injury, which proved his dexterity in gliding through the meshes of the code and the fissures of the law.

Plantin had made for himself many pleasant and even brilliant acquaintances; he had found backers for two or three theatrical managers who were in difficulties; he had helped out of very embarrassing circumstances a number of aristocratic young men, who, whether they wished to or not, were obliged, through gratitude, to speak to him in public and to shake his hand. So Plantin began to be seen the first nights at the theatres and at public funerals, and to count among the notabilities of that famous *all Paris*, which is composed of a thousand persons. And all this because he had led the life of a filibuster in a little provincial city and been driven away. His fellow-lawyers, by obliging him to sell out, had thought to ruin him; but, on the contrary, they had been the making of him. He had made, buried in Limousin, a wretched six or seven thousand francs a year, and at Paris his income was sixty or seventy thousand. Sometimes misfortune, even dishonor, in a worldly point of view, proves a blessing.

"Ah!" said Plantin, as he saw Rosita enter his office, "another quarrel with your upholsterer? He demands of you fifty-eight thousand francs, and you offer twenty-three."

This, in fact, was the matter which had first

brought Rosita to Plantin; but the actress, with a grave and serious face and a theatrical gesture, replied:

"No jokes, please, my dear Plantin! This is not the moment for that. When you know what has brought me here, you will see for yourself. I have a daughter, Plantin; I have a daughter!"

"Since when?"

"For the last three days."

"For the last three days?"

"Yes; Criquette!"

"Ah, to be sure; you have taken Criquette. I read it in the papers. Well! what have I to do with that? I don't understand."

"You will in a moment. I wish to bind Criquette to myself by the strongest ties. I wish to make her legally my daughter, to adopt her, in fact."

"Adopt her! Adopt her! How you do go on! In the first place, are you fifty years old?"

"Fifty! I? No, I am not fifty. What a question!"

"Well, then, it is impossible for you to adopt her. Return when you are fifty, if you still have the same fancy."

"Fancy! Ah! I see what you think. You think that, without reflecting, I have yielded to an impulse which time will modify. No, Plantin, no! Criquette is my daughter to-day, and will remain my daughter always, always, always, always! Do you understand?"

"Yes, yes, I understand."

"And I can't adopt her until I am fifty? Does the law say anything so stupid as that? I have no right to be good before I am fifty; no right to have any heart! Come, Plantin, there must be some way to do it. Read up your code a little."

"Very well," taking up a book. "Adoption of children is scarcely my specialty. Wait! Adoption. I don't know—oh, yes. Article 343, and following. Ah! this is what I was looking for. Yes, there is such a thing as official guardianship, but for that, as well as for adoption, the necessary age is fifty."

"The idiots!"

"There might be something else. This child has no father, nor mother, nor family of any sort?"

"She has absolutely no relations. I sent Aurélie yesterday to Belleville—"

"Oh, is Aurélie well?"

"Very well."

"You have a valuable maid there, who knows your affairs better than you do yourself, and who looks after your interests."

"I know, I know. She had a long talk with a charcoal-woman who was a friend of Criquette's mother. This is the way things stand: Her mother was a foundling, and, consequently, there are no relatives on that side. When her father died, they wrote to the mayor of his village; it was thought he had some connections there, but none could be found."

"Oh! when there is no money to receive, relatives are never found. Well, in that case, perhaps what is called a family council might be appointed to act as guardians of the child."

"And I could form a part of it."

"Yes."

"How many are there in a family council?"

"Six. When there are no relations, people who are interested in the child are chosen."

"I, first of all."

"Of course."

"Then my mother. Write down the names."

"Very well."

"I—my mother—the Prince—"

"No, not the Prince."

"Not the Prince! Do you think he won't consent? I should like to see him refuse!"

"He would consent, I am sure, but the law would not allow him."

"The law again!"

"In France, a foreigner can not form part of a family council."

"That's a shame! Here is a foreigner, rich, very rich, who is all ready to devote himself to a child's welfare, and the law forbids him. Well, we will give up the Prince, but I would like someone like him, some gentleman. I will ask Jaunard, the little Baron Jaunard. Do you know him?"

"Is not there a judgment out against him?"

"No; he discharged that three weeks ago."

"If it still stood, he could not—"

"He has discharged it, I tell you."

"I will write down his name, then."

"Then, Bidache, one of my fellow-actors."

"I know, I know. He is very funny in 'Gri-Gri.'"

"He overacts a little, at times."

"I did not think so."

"Let me see, that is four, is it not?"

"Yes, four."

"Monnet, our stage-manager. He is a good fellow, and we want the very best in the council."

"That makes five."

"And you. Will you be one?"

"Why, if you choose."

"There are your six, then. This family council will be a very good one."

"It will not be bad—a little of everything."

"Now be serious, Plantin, please, and arrange the matter. I want to assure Criquette's future. I want to leave all my fortune to her."

"Oh! Oh!"

"I know that just now my affairs are a little in disorder."

"A little! Very much so. We examined your pecuniary position the other day with Aurélie."

"I know, but I am going to ask the Prince to arrange matters for me once more; and then I shall be sensible, and commence to save. Criquette will oblige me to be serious and honest. I shall be better, thanks to her; I shall be another woman. Poor, dear child! Do you want to see her? She is below there in my carriage. Look!"

Rosita raised the shade, and Plantin, standing at his client's side, looked out. Criquette was seated in Rosita's barouche, dressed in deep, but very elegant, mourning. Rosita had ordered a black dress, very plain and simple; but even the plainest and simplest costumes that came from Rosita's dressmaker had an indescribable style about them.

Near the carriage-door stood Célestin, the groom. Out of the corner of his eye he was regarding his new little mistress. Rosita had given him tickets one evening for "Gri-Gri," and Criquette had sent him into convulsions of laughter. How he did long to talk to her! They would have understood each other very well. They were of about the same age, and they came from neighboring places. Criquette was from Belleville, and he, Célestin, from Ménilmontant. Rosita was a native of Vaugirard. As for the English coachman, who held himself erect in the most irreproachable manner upon the box, he boasted with pride that he was the natural son of a lord. He only, therefore, of them all, was of illustrious birth.

Plantin watched Rosita enter the carriage and drive away, then he drew down the shade and returned to his desk, thoroughly resolved not to bother his head much about Criquette's family council. To be sure, he had agreed to form part of it; but this had been, in the first place, in order not to disoblige his client, and, secondly, because he was certain that this brilliant council would never be formed.

"She will have forgotten all about it in six weeks!" he said to himself.

Whereupon he returned to his work, and racked his brains as to how he could induce, without too much scandal, the dowager Marquise de Châtel-Bénard to pay twenty-five thousand francs to Mademoiselle Rose Glandier on account of the young Vicomte de Châtel-Bénard, who, being a minor, did not have the wherewithal to satisfy those young persons who amused themselves by making him sign his name on bits of stamped paper. Plantin did not like scandal, on principle, and never resorted to it except in the last extremity.

There was some exaggeration in Plantin's prediction. At the end of six weeks, Rosita still thought of becoming the adopted mother of Criquette. She thought a little less of it, but still she thought of it.

Rosita's maternal exaltation was maintained, during the first month, at the very highest pitch. The child breakfasted with her every morning and dined with her every evening. Criquette had returned to her duties at the theatre, but she had not resumed her place in the dressing-room in the flies, where she had dressed with the four little girls who attended her as maids of honor in the procession. There was a sort of closet communicating with Rosita's dressing-room. In twenty-four hours this had been transformed into a very elegant little room for Criquette. So she lived absolutely the same life that Rosita did,

going with her every day to take a drive in the Bois. At first, during these drives, Criquette felt awkward and ill at ease; she held herself erect, not daring to lean back; but very quickly she became accustomed to all the luxury that surrounded her, and she assumed in her corner of the carriage an easy, nonchalant attitude, displaying a sort of immature grace.

Rosita made Criquette walk every day in the Bois for half an hour. And then she delivered the same ready-made speeches to everyone she met.

"This is my child! my daughter! and I am so happy! The sentiment of duty, you know. I have always wanted to have children, a daughter especially; and you shall see how well I will bring her up. Just now, her work at the theatre is enough for her, and I don't dare to have her do anything more. But, after 'Gri-Gri' is over, I want her to receive a thorough education. I shall give her a governess. The Prince has already written for one to England," etc.

Meanwhile, Criquette's list of acquaintances was extending. She had known for a long time how to say "Prince." She learned one evening in Rosita's dressing-room to say "Monseigneur" and "Your Highness." She was destined to learn more still.

It was about a month after the death of her mother. Passing through Paris was a young monarch who, plying conscientiously his trade of king, desired to be informed on all points, and to

see everything for himself. He was curious to visit the hôtel of one of the most beautiful women in Paris, whom he had noticed the evening before in a spectacular piece at the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre. Afterward he was to be present at a session of the Legislative Assembly, where about four o'clock a speech was expected from Jules Favre, in opposition to the official candidates.

His engagements for the day and evening were thus entered upon the memorandum-book of his chamberlain:

Three o'clock—Mademoiselle Rosita.

Four o'clock—Palais-Bourbon.

Six o'clock—Audience to the Austrian ambassador. Question of tariff customs.

Half-past eight o'clock—Palais-Royal Theatre. "Mimi's Memories." Boxes 2 and 4 in one.

So at three o'clock in the afternoon, as Criquette was seated in the dining-room near a window, looking over a picture-book, she saw Aurélie enter, and rose. The appearance of the woman always inspired her with a certain emotion which was akin to fear; she did not know exactly why, but it was so.

"Listen, my child," said Aurélie.

"Yes, Mademoiselle."

"And pay strict attention to my words. There is in Madame's room a person who desires to see you. This person was at the theatre last night, and thought you very nice. You must not speak to this person as you would to ordinary people. You must say to him Sire, and Your Majesty, and

you must put all your sentences in the third person. Do you understand?"

"I think so, Mademoiselle."

"Let us see. For example: To an ordinary person you would say, 'How do you do?' but what would you say to this person?"

"How does Your Majesty do?"

"Exactly. Go, my child, go!"

Criquette entered the room, and the personage who was there said to her:

"Good-day, my child."

"I have the honor to salute Your Majesty."

"Approach. Do not be afraid."

"I am not afraid, Sire."

"Can you repeat for me your kick of last evening?"

"I should be very glad to, Sire; but Your Majesty understands that it is a little difficult—without the excitement and the words."

Rosita then rose and gave her the cue. The kick was assuredly not so well done as it was in the evening on the stage, but it was very good, however. The august visitor deigned to be pleased, and placed two louis in Criquette's hand, saying:

"Here; that is to buy you a doll."

Such was the beginning of that thorough education Criquette was to receive from Rosita.

Criquette carefully placed the two louis she had received from the young king in a twelve-sou porte-monnaie Pascal had given her for a birthday present; but she had the misfortune to lose

this porte-monnaie the next day. This was a great grief to her; but, to do her justice, it was not the two louis she regretted most, but Pascal's present.

Criquette was destined to recover one day, and at a very opportune moment, both the porte-monnaie and the two louis.

One forgets quickly at eleven years old. A month at that age counts for many months. Criquette, however, still thought of her mother, and tears would mount to her eyes at the remembrance. Rosita resigned herself to a separation from Criquette at night, and the child slept in a room next to that occupied by Aurélie. One night she awoke with a start, crying out:

"Mamma! Mamma!" and looked about her in astonishment not to see the attic-room in Belleville. Then she heard Aurélie's voice saying:

"Go to sleep, my child; go to sleep."

Another night Criquette had a horrible nightmare. She thought she felt upon her lips the chill of her mother's last kisses. She commenced to cry. Aurélie rose hurriedly, and had much difficulty in calming the child, who, however, at last became quiet. Aurélie watched her closely, and when she had fallen asleep again, kissed her —for the first time.

Thus passed the first weeks in the new abode. Was Criquette unhappy? No, certainly not; she was only a child, and of course she liked to live in this pretty house, to go to the Bois in magnificent carriages, to wear fine dresses, and to eat good

things; but still she was not exactly happy, for she had a great trial to bear. She saw Pascal only in the evenings at the theatre, and then but for a few minutes at a time. He was her only friend on earth, her comrade, her brother. She almost reproached herself for being so well-housed, well-fed, and well-dressed; for being rich, in short (for she thought that she was rich and would always be so), while Pascal had remained poor. She longed to be able to share everything with him. She never forgot to place aside for him the half of her dessert, watching for the moment when Rosita was not looking, and then hiding in her pocket little cakes and candies. One evening, Rosita caught her.

"Oh! you greedy little thing!" she said.

"It isn't for me," answered Criquette, blushing scarlet. "It is for Pascal."

"Poor little thing, how sweet of you! Take them, my angel; take all that you want."

From that day, Pascal had every evening a princely dessert. He came to the theatre early, put on his monkey-skin, and went to the side-scenes to watch for Criquette; not for the bon-bons and the cakes, but for Criquette herself, whom he loved with all his heart, and whom he longed to see again. The two would go and sit down in a little dark corner where no one could disturb them, and there they talked for a quarter of an hour or so. These were the happiest moments of Criquette's life.

"Come, eat, eat! It is good, isn't it? It is

one of the same kind that you liked so much the other night."

They formed plans for the future. The theatre, always the theatre! They would enter the Conservatory; they would take all the prizes; they would be engaged by the same manager, and they would live together always!

At the end of the first month, an incident occurred which brought about a great change in Criquette's life. Lying flat on the carpet of the *salon*, she was playing one afternoon with Rosita's little dog. From time to time she stopped to listen, thinking that she heard loud voices and the sound of a quarrel in the next room. Then she began to play with the dog again.

It was indeed a quarrel, and a violent one, which had broken out between the Prince and the actress. Rosita, after much hesitation, for she knew it was a dangerous subject to broach, had asked Savéline, for the sake of Criquette, her daughter, to once more pay her debts. She had thought to soften the Prince by mentioning, in the very beginning, Criquette's name. But the result was disastrous.

"For Criquette's sake!" exclaimed the Prince. "Well, yes, let us speak of Criquette, my dear, if you like. To have taken that child was folly."

"Ah! There you go, just like Plantin, the other day, reproaching me for being charitable, for having some heart."

"No, I do not reproach you. The little girl is very nice and interesting. If you sent her to

school and paid the expenses of her education, very well. I should be quite ready for that. But to have installed the child here with you, and to exhibit her every day in the Bois—"

"Oh! Exhibit her!"

"Yes; exhibit her. I say that it is absurd and bad, in the interest of the child herself. That is my opinion. As for paying your debts, no! I give you ten thousand francs a month, and that ought to be sufficient for you. Besides this hundred and twenty thousand francs a year, I have twice, in the last five years, paid your debts, which each time amounted to two or three hundred thousand francs. You are too extravagant. I can not afford it. Then, besides, I have been very unlucky at cards lately, and have lost a large sum. So, what has happened? I have been obliged to make my property yield me more money than it did formerly—to force my stewards to more severity. I did not like to do that. I am not naturally cruel, and it annoys me to be obliged to squeeze my people because of you."

"Say, rather, because of gambling."

"Because of gambling and because of you. Both things, if you like; but especially because of you. You cost me much more than gambling does."

"Oh!"

"Yes, *much* more."

"Indeed!"

"And that is not all. Our czar is surrounded by a miserable set of advisers, and they have filled

his head with extravagant liberal ideas. They counsel a mad act—emancipation of the serfs; and such a piece of folly would make a great change in my affairs. It would reduce my income by at least one-third. For all these reasons, I will not pay your debts."

The discussion went on, and finally became so heated that Savéline, in exasperation, seized his hat and abruptly left the room.

Criquette was still on the carpet, making the little dog play with a paper ball attached to a string.

The Prince's movement to depart was so violent that he could not stop himself, and he stepped on one of Criquette's hands. The child uttered a loud cry, and sprung trembling to her feet.

"It is unbearable having this child always in one's way!"

And, taking her by the arm, he flung her across the room upon a divan. The Cossack reappeared! Then Criquette, frightened and hanging on to the edge of the divan, faltered:

"I beg your pardon. I ought not to have been there."

Rosita threw herself down on her knees beside Criquette, and encircled her with her arms to protect her. Attracted by the child's cry of pain, Aurélie appeared in one of the doorways.

Savéline recovered himself. He was not bad-hearted, and his act of cruelty suddenly horrified him.

"It is I," he said to Criquette, "it is I who should ask your pardon. I was wrong. Did I hurt you?"

"No, Prince, no."

"Show me your little hand."

"It is nothing. It is nothing at all. I was frightened. I ought not to have screamed."

"Don't cry. I will send you a beautiful toy. Would you like a beautiful toy?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Criquette, smiling through her tears.

Before leaving, Savéline turned to Rosita and said:

"Yes, I was wrong; but she ought not to have been there. She said it herself, not I."

An hour afterward, in the boudoir, a servant turned the handle of a parlor organ, upon the cover of which was a monkey playing a violin, with winkings and grinnings that showed his white teeth.

Criquette sat on a low chair and watched it; but there was no joy on her face at the possession of this marvelous plaything; on the contrary, there was a shade of sadness. A monkey! She thought of Pascal.

VI.

Meanwhile, Aurélie and Rosita were discussing the situation. In serious matters, Rosita always consulted Aurélie, and usually followed her advice. Aurélie was very calm, sensible, and prudent. Her manners and education were much above her station. She spoke slowly and correctly, in short, crisp sentences. A hundred times people had said to Rosita: "Your maid is really a well-bred person." Aurélie's spelling was the admiration of Rosita; she never made a mistake; and thanks to this, Rosita passed, among her acquaintance, for a person who wrote very well, the greater part of her letters being written and composed by Aurélie.

Despite all these merits, Aurélie remained strictly in her place, never sought to become familiar, and always addressed her mistress, even when they were alone, with the utmost deference. She had been fifteen years in the house, and no one, not even Rosita herself, had succeeded in drawing from her the slightest information in regard to her former life. She never received either letters or visitors. She never went out, except to go about once in three months to see a broker who had once been intimate in Rosita's household.

Curious and piqued at all this mystery, Rosita

had one day tried to confess Aurélie; but the latter answered very decidedly:

"I shall be grateful to Madame not to ask me any questions as to my past. My early life was a very hard one, and I had many sorrows. I don't like to think of it all. Do not force me to recall painful memories. I serve you faithfully, and that is the essential thing. Let the past sleep in peace."

However, during the first part of 1860, Aurélie appeared to feel a certain friendship for a Madame Guarena, who came for two or three weeks to give Rosita lessons in Spanish, but lessons of a rather peculiar sort. Rosita had been cast for a part in which there were eight or ten Spanish sentences to be spoken, and it was Madame Guarena's task to make the actress repeat these sentences over and over again. Madame Guarena was a woman of about sixty, thin and sickly-looking, but with very distinguished manners. She arrived very promptly at the hour appointed for the lesson, and Rosita, whose time was always very much occupied, would send Aurélie to ask her to have the kindness to wait a little. This *little* usually absorbed three-quarters of the hour which was to have been devoted to the lesson.

To Rosita's great surprise, Aurélie fell into the habit of keeping Madame Guarena company. A sort of friendship had evidently sprung up between the two women, and the end of the lessons did not put an end to the friendship. During the five months that followed, Madame Guarena came

very often to see Aurélie, and they had long conferences together. Finally, toward the end of April, Aurélie informed Rosita that she desired to have one or two days' leave of absence each month. She left early in the morning, and always returned in the evening in time for the theatre.

One morning, early in July, the servants sent the groom to follow Aurélie. He returned an hour later and reported that she had gone to the Northern Station, where she had purchased a ticket, but for what destination Célestin could not tell, as he was naturally obliged to keep at a distance. But after Aurélie's departure, he copied the names of the stations on the bulletin board: Beaumont, Méru, Beauvais, Saint-Omer, Amiens, Le Tréport. They never knew anything further.

As we have said, Rosita and Aurélie discussed the situation. The maid squarely declared that the Prince was in the right.

"But what is to be done?" asked Rosita. "Abandon Criquette? Never!"

"There is no question of that, Madame. If we could at once take the child from the theatre, and place her in school, it would be the best thing to do; but Criquette has a contract, and the manager will not release her so long as 'Gri-Gri' is on the bill."

"What is to be done, then? What is to be done?"

"Criquette passes the night upstairs with me. She might pass the day there also. The Prince

will not see her any more, and all annoyance will be averted."

"I had thought of that, but I did not want to speak to you about it. I was afraid of disturbing you."

"Nothing disturbs me when I can oblige Madame."

"And then, it is not that only. I thought I had noticed that you did not like Criquette."

"Oh, yes, Madame," responded Aurélie, in her chilly tones, "I like Criquette; I like her as much as I can like anyone. Madame knows very well that I am not demonstrative."

"Then you will take her with you?"

"Yes, that would be best for the child. It is not good for her to be mixed up in Madame's life. I will give her lessons in writing, spelling, and geography. I am capable of teaching her."

"I know, I know. Well, let us try that."

A new life began for Criquette, a very monotonous and colorless life. She had now only one pleasure—the theatre; that is to say, her part and Pascal. But how long the day seemed to her! Aurélie made her work for two hours every morning. The lesson always commenced with a dictation, invariably taken from the Scriptures.

And while Criquette wrote, leaning over the little table, she thought of Pascal's dictations, mingled with jokes and laughter. Work was a pleasure then! And the speeches of their dear melodramas returned to her memory, so that the poor little thing, one day, instead of writing that

"the spirit of the Lord descended upon David," wrote that "the spirit of the Lord descended upon *Buridan*."

When Aurélie took the dictation to read it over and correct it, Criquette was scolded; not too much, however, for Aurélie was never harsh or severe. She even did her best to be gentle; but habit was too strong for her. One can not learn to be tender with children; one must be so naturally, by inclination. To love is the surest means to make oneself loved. Now, Aurélie did not love Criquette, and yet, coldly and calculatingly, she devoted much of her time to the child.

That evening Pascal said to Criquette:

"You look sad. Is Mademoiselle Aurélie cross to you?"

"No, she is not cross. I should be ungrateful if I said that. She is kind. Yes, she is kind. She kisses me every morning and every evening; but—it is silly what I am going to say, it is silly, but it is true—it seems to me that she does not know how to kiss. Mamma knew. Ah, she is not mamma! And then, you see, Pascal, I think that no one else could be mamma."

Gradually the talks of Criquette with Pascal at the theatre became shorter and less frequent. Aurélie watched Criquette very closely; she would not allow her to run about behind the scenes, but obliged her to remain in the dressing-room until it was time for her to go on the stage, and to return there when she had finished. Pascal was forced to roam about and catch glimpses of

Criquette, who, every evening at the end of the play, perched upon a platform during the transformation scene, threw with both her hands to Pascal, crouched behind the scenes, the kisses which the authors had told her to throw to the audience.

Soon there were no more talks at all, for there was no more going to the theatre. Early in August "Gri-Gri" disappeared from the bill, killed by the heat, after a very respectable run of one hundred and thirty nights. It was followed by a drama, in which there was no part for Rosita or Criquette, but which served as a début for Pascal. He had one sentence to speak, a sentence of five words, uttered by a boy in the midst of an uproarious crowd.

Pascal's début! Rosita was to be present at the first representation, and Criquette, the evening before, said to her:

"Oh! please take me with you to the theatre to-morrow evening. I would so like to see Pascal make his début."

Rosita was touched, and promised to take her; but after a long conversation with Aurélie, she changed her mind and told Criquette that she was not to go. It was a terrible blow to the child, and she wept bitter tears. The next evening it was impossible for her to sleep. Pascal was making his début, and she was not there to applaud him with all the strength of her little hands. She turned back and forward restlessly in bed. The door into the next room was open,

and when midnight sounded Criquette saw Aurélie methodically lay aside her work, rise and leave the room; not, however, without casting a glance at the child, who pretended to be sound asleep. Aurélie went down-stairs to read the evening paper while waiting for her mistress.

Then Criquette had an idea. An hour afterward, when she heard Rosita's carriage stop in the courtyard, she slipped out of bed, and in her bare feet, her black hair floating over her shoulders, she looked down over the balusters. She was about to call out, "Madame, Madame, did Pascal do well?" when she saw the Prince slowly mounting the stairs after Rosita. Then she jumped backward, trembling and alarmed, remembering the Prince's anger the day when she was playing in the *salon* with the little dog.

All she heard were these words, spoken by the Prince:

"That play was a terrible bore!"

The next morning Criquette watched for Pascal; but Pascal did not come. The whole day passed, and still Pascal did not appear. Criquette could not speak to Rosita, as the latter was very busy. The Prince was to depart that evening for Saint Petersburg. As marshal of the nobility, he was obliged to go home to Saratov and look into that terrible question of the emancipation of the serfs. Rosita was to leave the next day for Dieppe, with Aurélie and Criquette.

About five o'clock Criquette was alone in her room, pretending to study her geography, but

her thoughts were elsewhere. Suddenly she saw the door open and the groom cautiously appear.

"Is there anyone here?" he whispered.

"No; no one."

"Take that, then, quickly. It comes from a little actor you know; but take care and don't let Mademoiselle Aurélie see it. The little actor is waiting in the street. If there is an answer, I will take it to him. You can give it to me without anyone seeing you. I shall be below in the hall."

He placed in Criquette's hands a folded piece of paper, and hurried away.

It was a letter from Pascal, and this is what he wrote:

My speech went very well. It made them laugh, and that was all right, for it is a comic speech. Sometimes, there are speeches which make them laugh when they ought not to, but my speech was meant to be funny. The author was pleased. He told me that I did well. I came this morning to tell you about it, but they would not let me in; they had orders from Mademoiselle Aurélie. The groom told me this. A good fellow, the groom. He will take you my letter. They want to separate us, Criquette. It is that wicked woman; but she can not do it; we shall see each other again, Criquette, and I shall love you always, always; remember, always. I kiss you, Criquette, and I am very glad that I did well, and I am sure that you are glad, too, Criquette.

Yes, she was glad, the dear little thing, and yet her eyes filled with tears. They wanted to sepa-

rate her from Pascal! He was waiting for her answer in the street, and, as the house was built between a courtyard and a garden, there was not a window that looked out on the street. Criquette's first impulse was to run out to see Pascal. But would the *conçierge* let her pass? All the servants were afraid of Aurélie. Criquette knew that, and they were not all as brave as the little groom. The poor child, already condemned to stratagem and deceit, thought it all over, and finally concluded that it would be better to write and not expose herself to the wrath of Mademoiselle Aurélie, who might then forbid her ever to see Pascal again. And then, too, she might discharge the groom. This last thought decided Criquette; she took a piece of paper and wrote:

Yes, I am glad, but very unhapy to. So will I, Pascal, luv you allwaze, allwaze, allwaze.

At this point, she heard Mademoiselle Aurélie enter the room, and she hurried away, carrying her letter. The groom was alone in the hall, and Criquette, not knowing how to show her gratitude, kissed him on both cheeks, saying:

"Thank you! Thank you!"

She felt that, like herself, he was of the people, and kind, like herself.

The next day, at ten o'clock in the morning, Rosita said to Aurélie:

"Take a cab and go at once to see Plantin. I have not had a minute to myself lately, and this morning I am worn out."

"What am I to ask Monsieur Plantin?"

"Ask him how the family council for Criquette is progressing. He will know what that means. It was very wrong of me to have neglected it, but the Prince's departure has completely upset me."

"Is there any need to hurry? We shall return in a month."

Aurélie spoke this last sentence very slowly and deliberately, like a person who has in her head something different from that on her lips. Then, suddenly, she continued:

"Yes, Madame, I will go to Monsieur Plantin's. I will go at once."

And, in fact, without losing a moment, she started off. When she arrived at Plantin's office, she said to him:

"What is this guardianship, this family council for that little girl Madame has taken in?"

"Nothing serious. I mentioned the thing to your mistress to quiet her. Has she still such a plan in her head?"

"It seems so, since she has sent me here. What is it that Madame wishes?"

"To be appointed guardian of the child."

"And that is difficult?"

"It is impossible."

"Why so?"

"Because, in the first place, she is not yet fifty."

"Ah! that is essential?"

"Yes."

"You said in the first place. Is there any other difficulty?"

"Yes; a very serious one. No judge would

give a child to the guardianship of a woman who lives the life your mistress does. You understand me, I think."

"Perfectly. Then, if Madame's life were different—"

"Ah! if she were a respected person."

"Respected and more than fifty. Could you show the articles of the law in which this is stated?"

"Why do you wish to see them?"

"Because of Madame. To prove to her that I have interested myself in the matter. Show them to me, please."

"Willingly. Look! Article 361, and following, on official guardianship. But it is a little long and complicated. There are a dozen articles."

Aurélie read only the first two articles; then, handing the book back to Plantin, she said:

"It is, indeed, a little complicated for me. I will simply say to Madame that it is impossible."

And that is what she did say to Rosita on her return; but what she did not say to her was that she had bought a code at a bookstore, on her way home; and she took this code in her bag with her to Dieppe.

A week afterward, at Dieppe, Rosita received the following letter from Savéline:

My Dear Rosita: I have found my affairs here in very bad shape. I intended to remain only two weeks, but I shall be forced to stay three months, perhaps six. I can not live without you. Come and join me at once, *at once.* On this con-

dition only will I pay your debts. And come without the little girl, of course. Put her at school. I will pay the bills. Our czar is resolved to proclaim this ruinous emancipation. I love you. God bless you! SAVÉLINE.

The czar was to emancipate Savéline's serfs. That was in his power; but it was not in his power to emancipate their master, who lived in a slavery harsher and more humiliating still.

Rosita received this letter in the morning at nine o'clock. She at once sent for Aurélie and said to her:

"We leave at noon for Paris, and this evening for Saint Petersburg. Here is what the Prince writes me. On this condition, he will pay my debts."

Aurélie read the letter attentively, and, handing it back to Rosita, replied:

"Madame can not hesitate. Madame must go; but I can not go."

"You can not go!"

"No; I regret to be obliged to leave Madame's service."

"To leave my service! You are not serious, Aurélie?"

"Very serious, Madame. I am worn out and far from well. I might have remained, and even desired to remain, some time with Madame in Paris; but I do not feel that I have the strength to go to Saint Petersburg."

"You are rich, it seems, to be able to retire."

"I am not rich, Madame. I have enough to

live upon, it is true, but I am not rich. The money I have made with you the last fifteen years I think I have earned. My profits have been large, doubtless. Why should I deny it? But if it had not been for me, you would have been robbed worse than you have been. I have always considered your interests."

"I believe that; but why leave me so abruptly?"

"I should not have left Madame abruptly, if Madame had not announced abruptly that it was necessary to go to Russia."

"Well, then, don't go this evening. I will go alone. Take your time. Take a rest, if you are tired. You can join me in a week, or in two weeks."

"No, not in a week, nor in two weeks. I shall not go to Russia."

"That is decisive?"

"I am very sorry, Madame, but it can not be."

"And that is not all. There is Criquette. What shall I do with Criquette? Aurélie, render me one service, at least. It gives me great pain to separate from Criquette, but I must do so. I am going to place her in a school in Paris. Promise me to go and see her several times a week, and write me after each visit."

"Even that is impossible. I do not intend to remain in Paris."

"If you will do me this favor, I will continue your wages during my absence. It is fifteen hun-

dred francs a year, I think, that I have given you."

"Yes; but fifteen hundred francs would not induce me to remain in Paris."

"Ah! you must be rich, certainly."

"But I can do more and better than what Madame asks me."

"More and better?"

"Yes; I am willing to take entire charge of Criquette, and for nothing, without accepting a sou from Madame; but the child must be mine, and mine alone."

"Yours alone!"

"I intend to live in the provinces."

"Where?"

"In Lyons. I have friends there. I will willingly devote myself to the child. It will give me something to do. I will bring her up well, give her a taste for work, marry her to an honest man, and she will be an honest woman."

Rosita ended by yielding, but not without a tearful struggle. She had thought for a moment of confiding Criquette to the care of her mother, but she knew how she herself had been brought up by that mother, and sold by her after a long bargaining, to a banker, for the sum of twelve hundred francs a year. "I will marry her to an honest man and she will be an honest woman." Words of this sort always appeal strongly to women like Rosita, when they have any heart, and Rosita was not without that commodity. She thought that she would be doing her duty if she gave Criquette to Aurélie.

Three hours afterward, in the Dieppe station, Rosita smothered Criquette with kisses.

"My angel, my love! You will write to me, will you not? And I will write to you. Auérlie, when do you intend to go away?"

"In a fortnight."

"And you will live in Lyons?"

"With the friends I spoke to you about."

"What is their address?"

"No. 11 Quai des Célestins."

The train moved away, and Rosita leaned out of the window as long as she could see Criquette. The poor child did not understand anything of what was happening. Naturally, she had not been consulted.

That same evening Aurélie addressed the following letter to Madame Pinglet, *Conçierge*, 11 Quai des Célestins, Lyons:

If you receive at Lyons any letters addressed to me, send them under a second envelope to Mademoiselle Aurélie Richard, Poste Restante, Beauvais. From Beauvais, I will send you from time to time letters, which you will simply mail at Lyons. If anyone comes to ask for me at your house, say that I live there, but that I am away for a month or two. If they speak of a little girl, twelve years old, who is now with me, say that she is well.

Some years previous, this Madame Pinglet, who was then Louise Rimblot, came to work by the day for Rosita; and Aurélie had found in the working-woman's pocket a ring belonging to her mistress, which she had looked everywhere for.

She could have had the woman arrested; she had spared her, but had arranged never to lose sight of her.

The evening of Rosita's departure, when Criquette was asleep, Aurélie read over carefully the ten articles of the code relating to official guardianship.

VII.

It may be well to explain into what hands Criquette had fallen.

Aurélie Richard was born the seventeenth of September, 1810, in Burgundy, at the Château de Marigny, the home of the Count de Lustrac; her mother, although very young, was the sole housekeeper of that great house, and managed things with a skillful hand; her father was head gardener of the château; both were excellent servants and possessed the esteem, confidence, and almost affection, of their employers.

Three days after Aurélie was born, Madame de Lustrac gave birth to a daughter. The two children were brought up together, absolutely together, until they were seventeen. Valentine de Lustrac was amiable, bright, laughing, and affectionate, but turbulent, undisciplined, and idle. Aurélie, on the contrary, cold, serious, and of a reflective mind, showed from her earliest years extreme application and an eager desire to learn. For this reason she was given as a companion to Valentine. Aurélie was easily the master-mind of the two, and the result was that at seventeen she knew all that Valentine ought to have known, and that, in her position, she herself had no need to know.

Very intelligent and very well educated, Auré-

lie, on the day of Valentine's marriage, found herself little better than a servant. She was confined to the linen-room, and passed all her time in sewing and embroidering. She was religious, went often to church, and even spoke sometimes of becoming a nun. She was nineteen when Madame de Lustrac proposed that she should marry the son of a neighboring farmer. Aurélie refused. She did not want a peasant; she wished to marry a shopkeeper or a clerk, to become a lady, and go to live at Dijon. Valentine, on her wedding-day, had told her that she would give her a dowry of ten thousand francs. This sum, which is nothing to-day, even for a waiting-maid, was considerable in 1829.

Two years after, Aurélie lost her mother, and took her place as housekeeper. Firm, severe, and honest, she had the gift of command; in spite of her youth, she knew how to make herself respected and obeyed. This did not prevent her, however, from being extremely unhappy. There is nothing harder than to feel above one's position.

In 1834, Aurélie was twenty-four; she was thin and sharp-featured. Two or three other offers of marriage had been refused by her disdainfully and without discussion. Always people of no account—gardeners and farm laborers.

It was in the spring of that year that a celebrated sculptor was summoned from Paris by Count de Lustrac to direct the work of repairing the stonework of the château, which was an

example of the purest art of the Renaissance. This sculptor did not come alone; he brought with him a tall fellow of about thirty, with black hair and white teeth, half workman, half artist, very skillful in his profession, a fine talker, and a Parisian. His name was Pierre Grassou. His master came and went between Paris and Martigny; but Pierre installed himself at the château, and stayed there six months.

The work was ended in the beginning of the autumn. Pierre left on the seventeenth of November. The next day Aurélie disappeared. She had followed him to Paris. Nothing burns like dry wood when it takes fire, and Aurélie had taken fire. One evening she had thrown herself into the arms of this man and given herself to him without conditions. He did not love her, but he was a Parisian, and the country bored him.

When Aurélie arrived at Pierre's house in Paris, he was angry and tried to drive her away. He did not wish to be encumbered with a woman. He had promised her nothing, nor had she even asked anything. Aurélie, throwing herself at his feet, begged and prayed to remain. She asked only one thing, that he would keep her, no matter where, in any corner. She would keep house for him, prepare his meals, and look after his linen. A word, a look from him now and then, would be all she asked, and would repay her for everything. He yielded, annoyed, but flattered at the same time to be loved with such violence.

Then began for Aurélie four years of a verita-

ble martyrdom. Pierre beat her, and twenty times brutally cast her out, tired of her love. She always returned, humble and submissive, passing entire nights upon the landing, and weeping—seated on the floor near the door—she who had never wept, not even when she lost her mother. And yet, she had loved her mother and regretted her; but there were no tears in her eyes the day of her death.

One morning Pierre said to her:

"I am going to be married."

"When?"

"To-morrow."

She leaned against the wall so as not to fall. He collected her garments and packed them in a trunk. She watched him with dry eyes. She had wept her last tear. She hesitated between these three things: to kill herself, to kill him, or to kill her. She did neither. She lived, if it can be called living. Her heart was dead.

She had expended on one person all that there was in her of warmth and passion. Henceforth, she was inspired with a profound disgust of all that resembled love. Insults and blows were what love had meant for her. She was destined to find love again, or something that passed for it, and to study it at her leisure in Rosita's house; and there was nothing there to give her a very high idea of it. Aurélie was twenty-nine when she was turned out forever by Pierre Grassou, and from that day man counted for nothing in her life.

She went to a second-class employment office, accepted what was offered her, and for twenty francs a month went to live with a clerk of the ministry of finance, who wanted a maid-of-all-work. During six or seven years she lived in at least twenty places. No one cared to keep her. Everyone gave her excellent recommendations, for she did her work well, but they all found her too depressing.

She was not, however, very unhappy. She felt a certain relief in being no longer that woman who had suffered so much, in being no longer herself, in being a thing belonging to her employers; they commanded, she obeyed mechanically. She rarely spoke, never laughed.

Early in October, 1845, Aurélie was seated on a bench in the employment office—how many hours she had passed upon that bench!—when, smart and dapper, there entered Mademoiselle Julie, Rosita's waiting-maid. She was in need of a good seamstress. She engaged Aurélie, and from morning to night for three months the latter passed her time in sewing near a window, with no other distraction than to watch the coachmen water their horses in the courtyard. Aurélie was very clever with her needle, and from time to time Rosita complimented her on her work.

"Julie is pleased with you," she said one day; "very much pleased with you; but why do you look so sad? Shall I send you to the theatre this evening? You will see me play."

Aurélie thanked her, but refused. She received

forty francs a month, and began to save with that savage economy which was one day to bring her to fortune. During the meals Aurélie did not open her lips, but she heard the servants talk. What a frightful system of stealing went on in the house! Everyone stole whatever he or she could, and the thought came at times to the former housekeeper that she would soon bring about a change if she had these people under her.

And all of a sudden that really came to pass. Rosita in a fit of anger turned her maid away, and sending for Aurélie, said to her:

"I have discharged Julie. Take her place as well as you can until I obtain another maid."

"I will try to please Madame."

A week after, Rosita said to Aurélie:

"I shall not look for another maid. I will keep you. You are a very intelligent person."

Aurélie bowed. In six months she was sovereign mistress of the household. She had stopped the thieving and reduced the servants to obedience. She herself was the only one to steal.

And yet was it stealing? She received from all the tradesmen a percentage, which is the general custom in Paris. She accepted, without ever soliciting them, presents from Rosita's friends and acquaintances. She sold back every year to a dry-goods house large pieces of satin, velvet, and lace. These were Aurélie's ordinary revenues; but she had extraordinary ones also, and very important at that. A veritable fury for speculation broke out in France immediately

after the proclamation of the Empire. To make money was easy. All one had to do was to buy, and after a time to sell again. Everything increased in value. Well advised by a prominent financier, who had taken a violent fancy to Rosita, Aurélie, from 1852 to 1856, amassed a hundred thousand francs. Half this sum was made by a single operation. She bought at par thirty shares of Crédit Mobilier and sold them at the highest figure; the profit was fifteen hundred francs a share.

It would not be uninteresting to enter into the details of Aurélie's makings and savings, with the accumulated interest for fifteen years; but, after all, but one thing is of importance, the result, which was most brilliant. When Aurélie made up her accounts the first of January, 1860, she had for her own—her very own—more than three hundred thousand francs, represented by first-class property. It was just about what Rosita owed at the same time.

So for fifteen years the establishment had paid its expenses, nothing more. The savings of the maid balanced the debts of the mistress. It was for this that Rosita, who had, to be sure, begun very young, was already in her eighteenth year of a life of glittering vice.

It was for this that for eighteen years the poor girl had lied so much, eaten so much without hunger, drank so much without thirst, loved so much without love.

It was for this that a young man, dismissed by

her, had blown out his brains, and that the mother of this young man had died of grief six months after.

It was for this that a woman had been forced to separate from her husband, had gone insane, was confined in a mad-house, and struggled furiously in the embrace of a straight-jacket, while three little children were without a mother.

It was for this that a man—almost an old man—of a great and ancient family, after thirty years of an irreproachable life, had one evening, because Rosita had pressing need of fifty thousand francs, cheated at play, been driven from his club, and had stolen away to hide himself in an American mining-camp.

It was for this that a young man, ruined to his last sou, had enlisted at twenty-six in a line regiment and been killed under the walls of Sebastopol, redeeming, at least, his life by his death.

It was for this that in the government of Saratov, at nine hundred leagues from that chamber where flew the Cupids with gilded wings, the serfs of Prince Savéline (five thousand souls) worked harder than in the past and suffered more cruelly from hunger and cold.

Yes, for this! — that Mademoiselle Aurélie might become rich and could go to live at Beauvais, a respected member of society; for that was her dream, and it was a dream that was about to be realized.

Yes, for this, and also for the unhappiness of Criquette.

For some time Aurélie had been haunted by projects of a peaceful retreat. But where? And how? To remain in Paris was not to be thought of. She wished to live somewhere quietly and respectably. After being for fifteen years the introducer to her mistress of pleasure-seekers, Aurélie was exposed to be saluted at every step in Paris by imperceptible nods of the head, accompanied by a slight smile, in which were mingled, in equal doses, gratitude and disdain. These smiles meant: "It is I! I was your master for a year, for six months, or for less, much less, than that. Do you recognize me?" And sometimes she did not recognize them—in which there was nothing very extraordinary, for that had happened two or three times to Rosita herself.

Aurélie's father had died, a broken-down man, a few years after his daughter's flight. Dead also was a brother, who had sailed for America, and been carried off, almost immediately after landing, by yellow fever. All her family were gone, and she alone remained. She had a revenge to take upon life; she wished it, and she would have it.

Clearly, to end her days with her gray hairs held in honor, she must leave Paris. But what difficulties stood in her way! Provincial society is narrow and exclusive. It is easier to enter the first circles of Paris than those of a little city like Bruges or Perpignan.

It was about this time that Rosita was obliged

to learn eight or ten Spanish sentences, and one of her friends said to her:

"My piano teacher is just the person you want."

"Does she know Spanish?"

"Quite well enough for your purpose. She is a Frenchwoman, but the widow of a Spanish count."

"A Spanish count!"

"Yes; the poor woman has met with misfortune. I will send her to you."

"How much must I pay her?"

"She charges a hundred sous an hour for music lessons. It ought not to be more for Spanish."

"Well, send her to me. I am curious to see your countess at a hundred sous an hour."

Rosita began to laugh. She did not believe in the Spanish countess. But she was mistaken; although Madame Guarena did not use her title, she was a real, authentic countess.

Count Guarena, although more than sixty years of age, had joined the bands of Cabrera in the Carlist uprising of 1838. After the defeat of the celebrated chieftain, the Count succeeded in passing the frontier, and took refuge in France. He had some resources—four or five thousand francs a year. He went to Beauvais, and hired a first-floor apartment in the Rue de la Taillerie. Three months after, he married Mademoiselle Célestine Ragonnet, daughter of one of the prefects, who lived in the same house, on the third floor. She was a person of about forty, insignificant and

gentle, who had long since abandoned all thoughts of marriage. Guarena was old and in feeble health, and he needed a nurse.

Madame Guarena lost her father in 1849, and her husband in 1852. After the Count's death, his affairs were examined, and, when all his debts had been paid, the notary handed to the widow three or four bank-notes for a thousand francs each. All scarred, shattered and shaky, as he was, the old Carlist had been still tormented by memories of his youth, and the grisettes of Beauvais had a very pronounced taste for rings, brooches, and ear-rings. It is in vain to be covered with honorable wounds; a man is not loved for himself after he has passed sixty, even in the provinces!

Poor Madame Guarena came to Paris to tempt fortune; she managed to obtain a few scholars in music and Spanish, which kept her from starvation; but she regretted Beauvais, her former life, her old friends, the quiet, slow provincial society with its games of whist at a sou a corner. The life she led in Paris was very painful to her. At first she had accepted pupils only in respectable houses; but she had to live, and so she finally became the teacher of Rosita's friend, and then of Rosita herself.

She was glad to talk of her misfortunes, and one day she made a confidant of Aurélie. The latter, who was busy with her needle, listened at first in an absent manner, but soon she let her work fall, raised her head, looked at the teacher

of Spanish, and began to think that the recital of her troubles was not devoid of interest.

All at once, she saw the possibility of a strange partnership; Madame Guarena furnishing respectability and an entrance into provincial society, and she, Aurélie, advancing the funds for the enterprise—honor on one side and money on the other.

But she must be careful not to embark lightly in such a venture. Was this fine story told by the Carlist's widow entirely true? After questioning Madame Guarena very closely, she proposed to her one day to go to Beauvais. Madame Guarena consented, and Aurélie accompanied her in her calls on her old friends. Her reception everywhere was full of warmth and respect. Aurélie discreetly took part in the conversation; she said that she was weary of Parisian life, and she thought very seriously of retiring to Beauvais, *with her dear friend, the Countess Guarena.* At these words, no one betrayed any astonishment. Madame Guarena had spoken the truth. She was a countess, and perfectly respectable houses were open to her in Beauvais.

These calls, where the conversation was made up of commonplace platitudes, appeared delightful to Aurélie.

At Madame Rigaud's, the doctor's wife, Aurélie did not lose a word of a long discussion upon the new priests of Saint Stephen's Church.

"After you went away," said Madame Rigaud, "we had the misfortune to lose that excellent

Abbé Clairget. His place was taken by a young priest, Abbé Maigrin, whose sermons are very good. He preached all during Lent."

"And Abbé Martillon?"

"Still at the cathedral. I had the pleasure of dining with him last Saturday, at Madame Riblet's. We played whist in the evening. Whist, you know, is his one little weakness."

"Yes, indeed, I know. Did he revoke?"

"Ah! you remember! Yes, he revoked in spades, and it was inexcusable, for he had three of them. I played the king—" and Madame Rigaud related the details of the hand. Aurélie did not understand whist, but she was interested, nevertheless, and she listened. The voices were well modulated and the words measured. She suddenly felt transported a thousand leagues from Paris and the Rue Trudon. What a contrast to Rosita's explosions of anger, with her violent denunciations of men in general and creditors in particular.

Aurélie felt herself leading a regular, tranquil life. She thought of her early ambition, to live respectably in Dijon. Beauvais and Dijon—they seemed very like.

And then, in all these houses, they showed her consideration, they offered her the place of honor, they saluted her politely, they conducted her to the door with extreme deference.

The pact was concluded, not without some resistance on Madame Guarena's part. She felt that she was selling herself; but Aurélie easily

quieted this last qualm of conscience. Besides, Madame Guarena was broken down by poverty, and the sentiments of pride and honor were dulled.

Early in June, 1860, Aurélie hired at Beauvais, in the name of Madame Guarena, a little house with a garden, situated near the railway station, in a street which bore this singular name, Rue du Bout-du-Mur. An upholsterer agreed to furnish the house very simply, but comfortably, in six weeks. It was therefore arranged that on the fifteenth of July the two women should install themselves at Beauvais; but on the tenth of July, as the house was ready, Aurélie said to Madame Guarena:

"Go alone, and renew your old ties; take up the thread of your former life. I will come and join you in a fortnight. That will be the best way."

A new combination had suggested itself to Aurélie's fertile brain. She wished to take Criquette. She was struck with the child's intelligence, grace, and gentleness, as well as by her promise of rare beauty. Criquette would be charming; and no one understood better than Mademoiselle Rosita's stewardess that beauty is one of the greatest forces with which to rule the world. Criquette could give consequence and a future to Aurélie's plans. She would bring her up well, make her a cultivated woman, and marry her honorably in Beauvais. The pretty girl would easily find a suitor, if suitably dowered.

And this was not all. Aurélie was not precisely tormented by remorse—that was scarcely in her nature—but for some time, since she had felt that she was sufficiently rich, a certain vague uneasiness was mingled with her pleasure at having made all that money. She intended to become religious again—seriously religious; this was part of her programme, where nothing was left to chance. She thought that a good action would dispel those slight qualms which astonished and annoyed her. She had supposed that she had ended forever with any struggle with conscience, but she was mistaken; there was still something of it left, as when a limb has been lost, left on a field of battle or a hospital table, still its former owner will suffer at times, and exclaim:

"Accursed limb! I have it no more and yet it pains me!"

This is why, on the third of October, 1860, after the vacation, Aurélie confided to Mother Marie-Josèphe, the superior of the Convent of Sainte-Marie, at Beauvais, the child who, on the seventeenth of March of the same year, played on the stage of the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre the rôle of the *Princess Colibri.*

VIII.

Rosita had been gone about two months, when Criquette entered the convent; for, in order to preserve clearness in this recital, we shall continue to call her Criquette, although she became Céline Brinquart when she entered for the first time the little house in the Rue du Bout-du-Mur.

It was a Monday when Rosita left Dieppe, and the next day Aurélie took Criquette directly to Beauvais, by the way of Rouen and Amiens. Aurélie remained there five or six days, then she told the child that she was obliged to return to Paris for a short time.

"Oh, godmother, take me with you!"

Godmother was the name by which Criquette was henceforth to call Aurélie.

"Take you? No. I am going to leave you here with Madame Guarena."

"Take me, please. I want so much to see Pascal."

"Pascal! Pascal!"

This boy of thirteen was decidedly Aurélie's most dangerous enemy, and the adversary which she must promptly rid herself of.

She showed some faint signs of irritation, but, at once recovering herself, said:

"I promise you that you shall see Pascal

again. I will send for him to come here at New Year's!"

"When is New Year's?"

"In four or five months."

"Oh! that is too long. Before that, godmother, before that!"

"No, not before New Year's; and then only if you are good up to that time."

"Oh! I will be good."

"Yes; but you must understand what I mean by being good. You will probably go to school in a convent, and there you will be with children whose parents are rich, who have not been obliged, like you, to sell flowers in the street and act in a theatre. These little girls have only one thing to do—obey their mammas; and I am your mamma now."

"You?"

"I have explained to you that it was no longer Madame Rosita."

"Yes, you told me that."

Poor Criquette! This was her third mother in three months.

"You must listen attentively to what I say, and obey."

"I will obey."

"In the first place, I am going to explain something that you will understand, because you understand very quickly. If the little girls with whom you will be should learn that you had been very poor, running after passers-by for sous, they would sneer at you."

"Why? It is unfortunate to be poor, but it isn't wicked. And then, what I did was to make money for mamma when she was sick. That wasn't bad."

"No, it wasn't bad."

"I worked, I did not beg; and yet if it had been necessary for mamma I would have begged. I did so once—only once, one day when I hadn't made anything at all. It was of an old gentleman who was so kind. I said to him: 'Mamma is sick,' and I cried. He saw that it was true, and he gave me ten sous. Was it wrong to take them?"

"No; but I assure you that those little girls would sneer at you."

"They would be wrong."

"Possibly, but still they would do so; besides," and Aurélie's voice became harsher, "pay strict attention to what I am going to say. You want to see Pascal again?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, if I hear that you have spoken of those things you must not mention, for instance, that you have been a little actress in a Parisian theatre, you shall never, do you understand, never see Pascal again."

"I will say nothing, godmother, I will say nothing."

"You promise?"

"Yes, I promise."

And as she longed with all her heart to see Pascal, she kept her word. She would have kept

it, however, even without that great longing, for she was an honest, loyal little creature, who never in her life had broken a promise.

She asked and received permission to write to Pascal, and she wrote a letter four pages long, full of affection and mistakes in spelling. Aurélie took charge of it to send to Pascal, but he was destined never to receive it.

At Paris, Aurélie attended to a vast amount of business in a very short space of time. Soon after her arrival she received a visit from Pascal, who had been watching for her. She was very clever, and conquered the boy by her kindness. She knew that he loved Criquette, and so she spoke to him only in Criquette's interest. She was about to enter a convent, work hard, and become an educated and cultivated woman.

"If you want to write to her," she said to Pascal, "you may; but write her a very sensible letter; give her good advice, and then, if you do what I wish, at the New Year you shall spend a week with us in Lyons."

And as Pascal found some difficulty in writing this letter, in which he was to give good advice to Criquette, Aurélie was kind enough to dictate it to him:

My Dear Criquette: Mademoiselle Aurélie has told me what she is going to do with you. She is good; you must love her and obey her in everything.

Then Aurélie, who was fond of brevity, said: "That is very good as it is. Now sign it."

But Pascal was very anxious to add a few lines of his own:

Write me, and I will answer. I love you, Criquette, and I shall think of you all the time. I send you, by Mademoiselle Aurélie, a paper which speaks of my début. There is a whole line about me. Don't lose it, for I want to keep it.

This paper, like Criquette's letter, never reached its destination. When Criquette demanded it, Aurélie replied that she had lost it.

Pascal went away resigned; he had Aurélie's address at Lyons; she gave it to him without hesitation, for she wanted him to write and receive no answer, so that he might believe himself forgotten, and forget himself.

An hour after Pascal's departure, Aurélie received a letter from Rosita, who wrote as follows:

Aurélie: Since you have kindly consented to attend to my affairs in Paris, these are my instructions. In a few days, Plantin will have the money to pay what I owe. Pay off everybody. Sell the horses and carriages at private sale, not by auction; I do not care to seem to be ruined when quite the contrary is the case. The Prince is perfect, but how I shall be bored in Russia! and I am afraid I shall have to remain here a long time. With the money from the horses and carriages, pay off the servants and send them away. I owe you some money; you lent me some five or six thousand francs, I think; you must know the exact sum. Pay yourself, and take five hundred francs more for Criquette's wardrobe. Kiss her for me, and write me about her. Poor little thing, how I would have loved her, if it had been possible and I had had the

time! I took only my jewels with me. Send me here my dresses, hats, linen, in fact everything. Oh, if you would only change your mind, and come, Aurélie! But still, for Criquette's sake, it is better that you should stay. Take good care of her. The two bay horses are very handsome. They cost ten thousand francs; don't sell them for less than five.

Aurélie had not changed her mind. She paid off all the bills very rapidly, in four or five days, and with the strictest honesty. She was rich enough now. There was something left over, three thousand francs, which she placed in Plantin's hands; told him that she was about to go to Lyons, and tranquilly gave him her address: No. 11 Quai des Célestins. She was careful to have the appearance of hiding nothing.

That same day, an omnibus from the Lyons railway waited before the door of the house in the Rue Trudon, loaded with five or six large trunks, containing all that belonged to Aurélie and all that belonged to Criquette. Nothing more. Aurélie was accustoming herself to honesty. The whole Rue Trudon saw her depart for Lyons.

When the omnibus reached the boulevard, and was opposite the Fauborg Poissonière, she ordered the driver to take her to the northern station. Three hours after, she arrived at Beauvais, perfectly easy in her mind. Who would come to seek her at Lyons and Beauvais? She owed no one any money. She could begin a new life. Criquette was hers—solely hers.

Nearly five months passed away. Aurélie, under Madame Guarena's patronage, slowly and prudently obtained a foothold in a score of houses in Beauvais. Everywhere she succeeded. Criquette at the convent won all hearts, she was so gentle and sweet; but she was very sad and anxious. Since her arrival in Beauvais she had, with Aurélie's permission, written seven times to Pascal; she had received two answers, and then nothing more. To Pascal went only the first two letters, which Aurélie allowed to go, as there was nothing said in them of Beauvais.

The children continued to write to each other, with mutual reproaches for their silence, but their poor little letters were stopped on the way, and burned into ashes in Aurélie's grate. The word *theatre* occurred in every line of Pascal's letters, and that was the very word that Criquette was not to hear; and when she spoke of Pascal to her godmother, the latter answered:

"He has forgotten you; forget him."

Pascal had not forgotten. His letters arrived constantly at Beauvais from Paris, by the way of Lyons. Imagine an affection so faithful, so persevering, in a child of thirteen! Was it to wear itself out? Was it to fall asleep, like Rosita's?

During these five months Aurélie received from Russia only one letter; it was delivered about the last of September, and was a model of brevity:

Aurélie: Send me news of Criquette. The Prince married me last week.

PRINCESS SAVÉLINE.

Aurélie answered that Criquette was well, congratulated the new princess, and that was all.

This is what had taken place at Saratov. The Prince's affairs were in a very tangled condition, and he found that he would be obliged to remain in Russia to look after them. Rosita said to him:

"I can not sacrifice for you my situation at the theatre. Marry me, or I return to France."

The Prince then summoned a very humble, filthy, old priest, and said something to him in Russian. All the servants of the castle were summoned. A number had already been present at a like ceremony. Ten years before the Prince had married, under the same conditions, a dancer from the Vienna Opera; he knew well how such knots could be tied and untied.

The old priest, in his turn, muttered something in Russian, and then the Prince said to Rosita:

"It is done! You are a princess."

Rosita had strong suspicions that the marriage was not entirely correct, but everybody in the castle called her "Princess," she could write to Bidache and her other Paris friends letters signed "Princess Savéline," and that was sufficient for the time being.

Savéline was no longer a young man—he was forty-eight; he drank too much champagne, and he was growing fat and red in the face. In July, 1861, he received a warning in the shape of a slight stroke of apoplexy, but he paid no attention to it, and continued to be too fond of champagne.

Rosita then imperiously demanded a more solid marriage before a better priest. She obtained it. Savéline died six months after, and Rosita inherited a million of roubles.

The first of January, 1861, arrived, and Pascal heard nothing from either Criquette or Aurélie.

For two months and a half he had been saving up his money, laying aside each day one out of the three francs he made at the theatre. He went to the Lyons station, and they told him that the fare to Lyons and back, third-class, was sixty-two francs. The thirty-first of December he had seventy-two francs. He bought for Mademoiselle Aurélie a bouquet for three francs, and for Criquette a beautiful book, bound in red, with gilt edges, for four francs; total, seven francs. He added up the figures on a little bit of paper: sixty-two and seven—sixty-nine. Three francs for his meals on the way would be enough. He would stay in Lyons with Mademoiselle Aurélie—she had invited him; so he started at noon, in an accommodation train.

The next day, January first, he arrived at Lyons early in the morning. The weather was frightful; the snow fell in heavy flakes. He hid his book under his jacket, but his bouquet would be spoiled. He inquired the way to the Quai des Célestins, but as he was about to enter the courtyard, a woman who was sweeping off the sidewalk stopped him and inquired in a harsh voice:

"Where are you going? Whom do you want to see?"

"Mademoiselle Auérlie."

"She is not here."

"Has she left already?"

"She is away on a journey."

"Will she be gone long?"

"Two months."

"And Criquette?"

"Who is Criquette?"

"A little girl who lives with Mademoiselle Aurélie."

"Oh, the little girl! She is away, too."

"Where have they gone? Very far?"

"I don't know; I haven't the address."

"And I have come all the way from Paris to bring them their New Year's presents—this bouquet for Mademoiselle Aurélie and this book for Criquette."

The disappointment was too cruel. His heart was broken, and bitter tears filled his eyes. At that very moment Criquette was crying, too, a hundred leagues from there. It was New Year's Day, the day on which it had been promised her that she should see Pascal, and her first thought as she awoke was:

"I shall not see Pascal again. He has forgotten me. He does not love me any more. While I—I shall love him always."

Meanwhile, Pascal, at Lyons, was asking Madame Pinglet for news of Criquette. Madame Pinglet was not ordinarily very sympathetic, but she was a little touched at Pascal's distress, and she tried to comfort him.

"The little girl is well—very well. I will try to send your bouquet and book."

"Oh, it is no matter about the bouquet. It would be faded; keep it for yourself; but let me write a little letter to Criquette."

And, in the *conçiërge's* room, Pascal wrote the following letter:

My Dear Criquette: I am so unhappy. I have come from Paris with a bouquet for Mademoiselle Aurélie and a book for you. They say that you will not return for two months. I can not wait till then; they have only given me a week's absence at the theatre, and I have only twenty-six sous left. I wish you a happy New Year, Criquette, and I kiss you in my heart.

Pascal returned to Paris, and his life for the next six years may be summed up in a dozen lines. He had really considerable talent for the stage. In 1864, after an examination, he entered the Conservatory as a pupil. In 1866 he obtained a second prize for tragedy and a first prize for comedy. He was only nineteen, and they said to him: "Stay another year at the Conservatory; next year you will receive the highest honors, and that will mean the Français or the Odéon." He hesitated, for he longed to begin at once in the provinces, and he ended by accepting a position to play the juveniles with a company at Vichy.

August 7, 1866, at noon, Pascal was rehearsing, on the Casino stage at Vichy, the part of *Octave* in Murger's "Olden Times." The same day, at the same hour, Criquette was asking

Mother Marie-Josèphe, the superior of the convent of Sainte-Marie, to grant her a private audience. Criquette had finished her studies, and at four o'clock was to leave the convent to return no more, and to go and live with Aurélie and Madame Guarena in their little house.

A sister came for Criquette.

"Our mother superior will see you," she said.

A few moments after, Criquette, casting herself at the superior's feet and seizing both her hands, exclaimed:

"I do not want to go, Mother; I do not want to leave you! Keep me, I implore you. I want to become a nun, and to live and die here. You have been so good to me, Mother, the last six years—you and all the other sisters—everybody! Here only do I feel that I am loved—loved by you, and also, I hope, by the good God. Keep me, Mother, keep me!"

Thus spoke Criquette, who was no longer a child, but a charming young girl of seventeen; still Criquette, however, with her great, deep, tender dark eyes, her white, slender hands, and her delicate beauty, full of grace and distinction. And, nevertheless, she was the daughter of a house-painter and an apple-woman. Chance plays strange freaks at times.

The superior raised Criquette. She was a very intelligent woman, who had for a long time read the child's heart. She knew that alone, of all the pupils of the convent, this girl looked forward to the arrival of the vacations with a sort of sadness,

amounting almost to terror. She knew that it was not a real vocation which would cast her into the arms of God. The house of the Lord would be to her only an asylum, a place of refuge. Ought she to grant this asylum to her? And, moreover, could she? Criquette had been placed, three years before, under the legal guardianship of Aurélie. The thing was done without the least difficulty. Aurélie was held in the highest respect at Beauvais.

Her life for the past six years had been irreproachable. She devoted considerable time to the poor, was a member of several charitable societies, visited the prisoners, and displayed great activity and zeal. Her hair had grown white, which gave her a highly respectable air; she had changed her manner of dressing it; instead of the two flat bands, large puffs framed in her face—in fact, she was almost unrecognizable.

One Sunday, however, in the spring of 1865, Aurélie had a moment of terrible uneasiness. A young captain of hussars had come from Paris to pass the afternoon at Beauvais with one of his friends, the lieutenant-colonel of the regiment of infantry stationed in the town. The band was playing in the public square. All Beauvais was there. The two officers strolled about in the crowd. Suddenly the captain saw coming toward him an old lady, grave and dignified, with a prayer-book in her hand. The hussar started with surprise. There flashed before him the three months of his life in which he had

spent the most money. It was not Aurélie he saw again, but Rosita, and, consequently, much else. He looked attentively at Aurélie, who at the first glance had recognized him. She continued on her way, however, not turning aside a hair's breadth, and passed him, apparently immovable, sustaining his gaze without the slightest change in her face. The captain resumed the conversation with his friend. This was the only danger Aurélie ever incurred.

The interview between Mother Marie-Josèphe and Criquette was a very long one. The young girl was peculiarly frank and straightforward. She did not utter any high-flown phrases expressive of her desire to devote herself to God, and to renounce the pleasures of this world. She would not have disdained these pleasures, perhaps. She loved the convent because she was loved there, and that is the reason she wished to remain. She had only one desire in the world—to be loved. Her mother had loved her; Pascal had loved her. So she still held close in her memory her mother and Pascal.

And Mademoiselle Aurélie! Criquette reproached herself very often for her coldness to her godmother. She even accused herself of harshness and ingratitude. Mademoiselle Aurélie had received her and paid all the expenses of her education; she came to see her at the convent twice every week. During the Easter and New Year's vacations, she did her best to interest and amuse her. All this was a great deal, and yet it

was nothing. Criquette did not feel that she was loved.

On the other hand, at the convent she was surrounded with tenderness and sympathy. The little cake-seller of Belleville found some difficulty at first in adapting herself to such a regular, orderly, monotonous existence; but little by little she grew to love it. She was delighted with the brilliantly decorated chapel and the somewhat theatrical services; the procession of the pupils with their voluminous white muslin veils, while the organ thundered loudly or murmured sweetly. The odor of the incense mounted to her brain, and the harmony of the psalms filled her with ecstatic emotion. Every Sunday, at mass, one of the sisters sung alone; she had a superb voice, ardent and full of expression, a real stage voice; as she listened, Criquette often felt the tears run down her cheeks.

There remained a little of the *Princess Colibri* in the school-girl of Sainte-Marie; there were so many confused memories troubling her brain. At eleven years of age, in Rosita's dressing-room, she said *Monseigneur* to an Imperial Highness who had come to see her act, and at thirteen years of age, in the convent garden, she also said *Monseigneur* to the bishop, who that morning had administered to her her first communion.

At first, Criquette was often assailed in chapel by singular visions. Above the altar was a statue of the Virgin, with arms outstretched, and all covered with votive offerings: necklaces and brace-

lets of sparkling stones. Placed in a deep niche in the wall, the statue was bathed in light, which fell on it from above. In contrast with the obscurity of the chapel, this produced a most startling effect. And often it was no longer the music of the organ that Criquette heard, but the crash of the orchestra in the transformation scene of "Gri-Gri." It was no longer the Holy Virgin that she saw, but Rosita on the stage, in the glare of the calcium light, and adorned with diamonds and pearls.

But this vision soon faded away, and Criquette saw only the Virgin, with outstretched arms, smiling down upon her. She even ended by fancying she heard her speak, and to her ears came very distinctly the words:

"Remain with me, my child. I will be thy friend, if thou hast no friend, and thy mother, if thou hast no mother."

To the convent was attached an orphan asylum for little girls, which was also under the direction of the sisterhood. The children came to the services in the chapel, and sat on benches opposite the choir.

One day during Lent, the almoner of the convent, an old priest without any eloquence, but gentle and simple, took for the text of his sermon this verse from the Psalms:

"Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God."

And the old priest said to the orphans:

"Come to the God of the poor and the forsaken, to the God of those who have no inheritance of love. He is the family of those who have no family, the support of those who have no support, the hope of those who have no hope. Come to God, you who are alone, and you will be no longer lonely. Come to God, you who are not loved, and you will be loved."

Criquette applied these words to herself. She remembered that she had once been as poor as were those little girls who sat there, squeezed together, in their humble black frocks; and, although she was seated in the ranks of the rich pupils—the pupils who had a family—Criquette felt herself an orphan, alone, and abandoned.

God offered himself, and the poor girl who had known once, but knew no longer, the sweetness of being loved, accepted him. And yet she was no angel, but a thorough woman. If Pascal had been there, she would have preferred him, perhaps; but Pascal was not there.

The superior questioned Criquette, and said to herself:

"She is not called by God; life frightens her; I ought not to keep this child."

Still, Criquette's emotion was so great, her supplications so touching, that the superior promised to speak to Mademoiselle Aurélie, who was to come herself at four o'clock to take the girl away.

"You are a minor," she said to Criquette, "and I can not keep you here without the consent

of your guardian. And, besides, I should not be disposed, even with her consent, to allow you to begin to-day your two years' novitiate. I am not sure enough of your vocation. But I will ask Mademoiselle Aurélie to allow you to return after the vacation and remain a year longer."

"That is better than nothing, Mother; but no vacation! no vacation!"

"That is all that I can do. Go, my child, go."

The interview between Mother Marie-Josèphe and Aurélie was not so long. The only answer the superior obtained was a short, distinct refusal.

"The child," said Aurélie, "has no vocation whatever. You know my sentiments, Mother, and you know how gladly, were it otherwise, I would allow her to embrace religion. I desire only her happiness—and her happiness does not lie in that direction."

She took Criquette away, and they went on foot along the boulevard, walking side by side in silence for some time.

Then Mademoiselle Aurélie, suddenly turning to Criquette, said:

"Where did you get such a foolish idea as to remain in the convent and become a nun?"

And as Criquette was slow to answer, she added:

"I have other plans for you, I assure you."

"What plans?"

"You shall know soon."

Mademoiselle Aurélie, for six years, had offered

to the world the most edifying spectacle. She went to church assiduously, and her Prie-Dieu bore her name engraved upon a copper plate. Hour after hour she passed there, kneeling upon that low chair and trying to force herself to fervent prayer; but neither love nor prayer can be attained by an effort of the will. Real prayer mounts naturally from the heart to the lips.

Mademoiselle Aurélie continued, however, to perform punctiliously her duties to God, as to a very influential person, and one quite capable of rendering her very useful services in this world, if not in the next. God to her was not an end, but a means.

Doubtless it would have been well to give Criquette to the church—that would have had an excellent effect in Beauvais—but it appeared to Aurélie to be much more advantageous to give her to some husband in comfortable circumstances and of good family. Aurélie's social relations would be thus heightened and extended, and her position solidified.

The doors of Beauvais first! The doors of heaven could be considered later. There was a time for all things.

IX.

From the time of her entrance into the convent, Criquette had never worn anything, even during the vacations, but the very simple and rather unbecoming dress of the school-girls. The best-born girls of Beauvais were given to the charge of the ladies of Sainte-Marie, and it pleased Aurélie to walk the streets of the town with Criquette, wearing the conventual garb, at her side; it was a sort of hall-mark, so to speak.

But for two or three months Aurélie had been preparing a *coup de théâtre* which should reveal to all the young girl's grace and beauty, hitherto concealed. She became once more the lady's maid she had been for fifteen years, in the employ of a woman whose business it was to be beautiful, and never beautiful in the same way two days in succession. Aurélie disinterred her former talents. She had made Rosita a success, and it was now her task to make Criquette an equal one; but this time the circumstances were vastly different. It was done for a good motive, for an honorable marriage.

Criquette left the convent on a Wednesday, and the next morning the young girl who, the previous evening, had spoken of consecrating her life to God, was examining, with evident curiosity, five or six dresses, real masterpieces,

created by Aurélie, and in which were happily blended Parisian elegance and provincial simplicity. Criquette was to make her début that evening, at Madame Rigaud's, who gave entertainments every Thursday, consisting of music and tea.

During the day Aurélie devoted herself to the arrangement of Criquette's hair, which was very beautiful. This was a tremendous task, which lasted three hours. After many trials and many experiments, Aurélie exclaimed, triumphantly: "That is exactly right!" and so it was. But while Aurélie was brushing, smoothing, and curling Criquette's hair, the latter was thinking of how, when a little girl, she had seen Rosita's blonde locks brushed, smoothed, and curled by those same hands.

Very proud of the result obtained, Aurélie called down from the top of the stairs:

"Madame Guarena! Come up, Madame Guarena!"

And when that lady entered the chamber, she continued, triumphantly:

"Look, my dear, look! The prettiest girl in Beauvais."

Aurélie was confident that she was not mistaken the day she said that Criquette would be charming, but the reality surpassed her anticipations. She felt the pride of the general who sees his foresight justified, and who scents victory in the air.

That evening, at Madame Rigaud's, there was only one opinion:

"The prettiest girl in Beauvais!"

Criquette was showered with attentions, fêted and petted; and yet she was bored to death, this prettiest girl in Beauvais! What a life, alone with those two women!

Madame Guarena did not count. She was neither good nor bad—a mere nonentity. After so many years of poverty and privation, she became torpid in this life of comfort which had come to her as if by a miracle. She passed entire days playing solitaire, three kinds of solitaire, always the same — Napoleon's Favorite, The Monks, and Mr. Smith. She kept an exact account of her games. In the evening she wrote upon a little memorandum-book: "To-day, August 22, 1866, played seventy-nine games of solitaire; succeeded in doing The Monks twelve times, Mr. Smith eleven times, and Napoleon's Favorite fourteen times." And so it went on the the whole year through.

Madame Guarena dragged herself away from her dear solitaire only to make Criquette practice on the piano two hours a day. To this lesson succeeded two hours of reading aloud by Criquette to the two women—always novels, and always moral novels, taken from the circulating library of Madame Pingat, who guaranteed all the works in her catalogue to be pure in tone. Then an hour's walk beside Mademoiselle Aurélie down the boulevards of the town, which were very handsome, but very gloomy. After dinner they paid visits, except on Tuesday, which was

Aurélie's reception-day. Thus passed dully enough for Criquette the first six weeks after her return from the convent.

In the chilly, silent house Criquette had only one friend, a big black Newfoundland dog named Pierrot. From the first day, Pierrot and Criquette understood and loved one another. The sweetest moments in the young girl's life were those she passed seated upon a bench in the garden, with Pierrot's head in her lap. Never moving, Pierrot regarded his mistress fixedly with his kind, sympathetic eyes.

In these hours of reverie Criquette's conscience was at times troubled. She would say to herself: "Where am I? What is my guardian? What does she want of me?" It is of no avail to have been brought up in a convent, it is in vain to have been fed only on moral stories, when one is seventeen and very intelligent, and when to girlish impressions are added the memories of a child who had roamed freely about the streets of Paris, explored the regions behind the curtain of a theatre, and lived in the house of a noted actress.

One day when Criquette was seated upon the bench with Pierrot, she suddenly heard Mademoiselle Aurélie's voice within the house. She was roundly scolding Thérèse, their little maid. Why was she so severe with that poor girl? She must remember that she herself — Criquette remembered. No, she was not mistaken, Aurélie had been Rosita's maid; but then how, all of a sudden, had she become rich? For she was rich,

since she spoke of giving her—Criquette—a dowry. Where did this money come from which Criquette would bring to her husband? That was what constantly perplexed and worried her.

The great match-maker of Beauvais was Madame Rigaud. The wife of a physician, and therefore knowing all grades of society, she was in an admirable position to ply her useful trade. On two occasions during the last six weeks she had made overtures to Aurélie, facts of which Criquette was unaware. The first time it was a captain, young, distinguished, not without fortune. Aurélie formally refused him. A soldier? A garrison life? By no means. The second time it was a doctor whose family lived in Beauvais, but who himself resided in Paris, and who already had a very respectable practice. The answer was the same. When her ward married, she must live near her at Beauvais.

But one day about the middle of September, in the midst of the reading of a novel in which the word *love* was everywhere replaced by the word *sympathy*, Madame Rigaud arrived, highly excited and all out of breath:

"I want to speak to you—to you alone," she said to Aurélie.

They went out together to take a walk in the garden, and when they were twenty paces or so from the house, Madame Rigaud exclaimed:

"Ah, my dear, if you only knew! if you only knew! You will not say no this time! A young man is in love with your ward, and that young man is—"

"Yes?"

"Stanislas Meunier, the son of Monsieur Jean Meunier." These three words, Monsieur Jean Meunier, were of extraordinary importance, and this is why:

From 1810 to 1832 Pierre Meunier manufactured bone buttons of all styles at Beauvais; he employed a score of workmen. Then came the turn of Louis Meunier, with fifty workmen, from 1832 to 1850; and since 1850 Jean Meunier had been at the head of one hundred workmen in that same button factory, founded by his grandfather and increased by his father. He had two children: A daughter, married to a judge of Douai, and a son, Stanislas, a tall, light-haired young man of twenty-three, who was studying law in Paris, but in the most desultory manner, for he had begun in 1862, and as yet had passed only two examinations.

To the great chagrin of his father, Stanislas appeared determined not to manufacture bone buttons of any sort. Perhaps this was a little the fault of Jean Meunier himself. The three first Meuniers had been brought up in the following manner: At school until they were thirteen or fourteen, when they knew how to read, write, and cipher, to spell well enough, and with a little history and geography in their heads to boot. Their apprenticeship then commenced; they passed successively through all the workshops, studying all the details of the trade, so that later, when a workman appeared to him awkward, any

one of the three Meuniers could say to him, rolling up his sleeves:

"Stop, my boy, and watch me; I will show you how to do it."

But Jean Meunier, the third of the dynasty, wished to give his heir presumptive a complete liberal education—the whole layout, as he expressed it. Stanislas passed ten years in one of the biggest Parisian colleges, where he was taught rhetoric, astronomy, geology, ethics, logic, and psychology. He learned nothing of all this, but still he was taught it. He had all the difficulty in the world to obtain his degree as bachelor of arts. He had to try three times, and, after leaving college, to pass a year at one of those hideous establishments where they cram candidates with *all the notions exacted for a degree*, just as poultry-raisers cram fowls with the most indigestible of food. And it is absolutely necessary that this food should be indigestible, for otherwise they would digest it and not grow fat; but still their fat is unnatural and the flesh tasteless and flabby; it is bloat, not health.

Stanislas obtained his degree and returned to Beauvais. That was a great day! He was the first bachelor of arts in the family. They were all waiting for him at the station. His father embraced him warmly, and said to him:

"Now to the factory!"

"Oh, no, papa, not yet. I wish to study law; not to practice, but simply to have the title of lawyer."

Father Meunier was not a lawyer, which did not prevent him, however, being esteemed one of the most sensible and judicious members of the Beauvais Chamber of Commerce. And yet he was tempted, the imbecile! His son a lawyer!

"Very well, then, go and study law; but immediately after that you must go to the factory!"

"I promise faithfully, papa."

Stanislas had been in Paris four years, and had worked very hard. He had become a first-class billiard player. He was already spoken of as in the first rank of amateurs, and he was only twenty-three!

Statisticians are agreed, it seems, upon this point, that France has made considerable progress in the art of billiards. The great improvement commenced under the Empire, and has never stopped since. There are very skillful, clever, and learned professors of the art; and, in all probability, there will one day spring up in the heart of Paris a sumptuous and costly university of billiards—laical, of course.

Stanislas engaged a professor, quite a young man, and a bachelor of arts, like himself. Who is not a bachelor of arts in France? This young professor was the son of one of the masters of billiards, who, like Monsieur Meunier, wished to give his son a grand liberal education. The young man was an excellent student, took prizes at college, an *accessit* for Latin verses at the general competition, and easily passed the examina-

tions for his degree. When his father was congratulated, the day after this success, he answered:

"Yes, all that is very nice, but serious matters must be thought of now. George must devote himself to billiards."

George did devote himself to billiards, and succeeded admirably; there is such a thing as hereditary talent. Stanislas, by dint of unremitting labor, became one of his most brilliant pupils. He worked, or played, from seven to eight hours a day. But the mind can not be devoted to serious things all the time. Stanislas amused himself a little, and pleasure is anything but cheap in Paris. His follies, however, were not ruinous. He had an allowance of four thousand francs, and generally arrived at Beauvais, in the month of August, during the vacation, in debt from five to six thousand francs. Jean Meunier raved and stormed, but his wife intervened, and he always paid—always for the last time.

Stanislas passed two months at Beauvais. He astonished the frequenters of the Café Potard and the Café Velut, the two great cafés of Beauvais, in the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville. While declaring "he would do much better to enter the factory," his father was flattered to know that his son could give fifty points in a game of a hundred to the best player in Beauvais. And one day the best player in Amiens came expressly to play with Stanislas a game of a thousand points, five hundred at a time, at the Café Potard. The gen-

tleman from Amiens sustained a shameful defeat. This caused quite an excitement in the two cities. A wordy battle was engaged in between the newspapers of the Somme and the Oise. The editor of the Somme *Watchdog* said:

Our champion would not have been beaten if he had been familiar with the billiard-table of the Café Potard; but he was not familiar with it, while Monsieur Stanislas Meunier has been brought up on that billiard-table.

The *Propagator of the Oise*, a liberal organ, found these quarrels deplorable:

A polemic about a game of billiards! That is what we are reduced to in this great stagnation of the Empire!

The first of September, 1866, Stanislas had not yet reappeared in Beauvais. His father was obliged to go for him and bring him back by force. Stanislas obeyed, but with a tragical air. The situation was, in fact, more serious than usual. Six months before, he had had the pleasure and misfortune to encounter a rather pretty young person who had very black eyes and very yellow hair. This was a rare combination once, but is now very common, thanks to the improvements in chemistry; but love has nothing to do with these details. In short, Stanislas' debts amounted to twenty thousand francs; he was frightfully dunned by his creditors, and two or three of them had the indelicacy to appeal directly to his rich father. Those who estimated the fortune of the elder Meunier at a million

were somewhat below the truth; and the profits of the factory averaged, good and bad years taken together, about sixty thousand francs.

But to pay, in one lump, twenty thousand francs! And it would probably be forty thousand francs the next year! Never! Then young Stanislas exclaimed:

"I am dishonored; there is nothing left for me to do except to blow out my brains. Six thousand francs of my debts are debts of honor."

Debts of honor are gambling debts; that is to say, the least honorable in the world. A man is not dishonored when he does not pay the six thousand francs he owes his tailor, but he is dishonored when he does not pay the six thousand francs he owes an adventurer who knows how to turn the king at écarté. Such are the morals of this world!

Father Meunier ended by softening. He agreed to pay the money, but on condition that Stanislas should marry at once and settle down with his wife at Beauvais. This was precisely the suitor Aurélie desired.

There were in Beauvais exactly three young girls who would be a suitable match for Stanislas; between them they represented, in dowries and hopes, between two hundred and fifty and three hundred thousand francs. Stanislas consented to see the three young girls. They were all of them remarkably ugly. Stanislas refused. He preferred dishonor.

Things were in this state when one day, as the father and son were crossing the Place de l'Hôtel

de Ville, they met, close to the statue of Jeanne Hachette, Mademoiselle Aurélie and her ward. Scarcely had they passed when Stanislas said to his father:

"Did you see, papa? Did you see?"

"See what?"

"That young girl! How pretty she was!"

"I did not notice."

"Her eyes! Didn't you see her eyes?"

"I saw nothing, I tell you."

"Ah! if I could marry her, I would. Let us follow her, papa; let us follow her."

And Monsieur Meunier, the respected merchant, member of the Chamber of Commerce, did at fifty-eight years what he had never done in his life at Beauvais—he followed a woman.

"But you know, papa, to follow a woman properly you should go in front of her."

Stanislas evidently had not entirely wasted his time in Paris. He had brought back pretty correct ideas on the art of following a woman.

The father and son passed the two ladies, and immediately after Stanislas asked:

"Do you know them?"

"I have met them occasionally, but I do not know them."

"Ah, papa, they are stopping; they have met Doctor Rigaud. They are talking with him. Come, let us take a little turn in the Rue des Jacobins, and when Doctor Rigaud has quitted them we will join him. He will tell us who she is."

Vanquished and docile, Father Meunier took a little turn in the Rue des Jacobins, and an hour afterward there was a great conference with Madame Rigaud, who bore enthusiastic witness to the virtues of Mademoiselle Aurélie. There was not a large dowry, fifty thousand francs, but a hundred thousand crowns in expectations.

After this, bubbling over with excitement, Madame Rigaud hastened to see Aurélie. Everything appeared to conspire to bring about Criquette's prompt happiness. It was a Thursday, Madame Rigaud's reception-day, and the interview could take place at her house that very evening.

Aurélie considered that she ought to inform Criquette of the situation of affairs. That young lady received the news graciously enough. She could not be angry with the young man for falling in love with her at first sight; besides, marriage would be in every way quite a different thing from the existence to which she was condemned, and anything rather than that—anything!

In the evening, while dressing, she looked at herself in the glass with a little more attention than usual.

"Am I really so pretty," she thought, "as to have turned the head of that gentleman?"

When Aurélie and Criquette arrived at the Rigauds, all the Meuniers were already there—father, mother, and son. The entertainment at once began. A gentleman recited some verses.

Another gentleman—a mortgage clerk in the city hall—sung with a lady the duet from "Favorita." Criquette herself played, without requiring to be urged, one of Beethoven's sonatas, neither well nor ill, but prettily and naturally.

Aurélie departed from her usual gravity; smiles wandered over her lips; she was enacting the rôle of a mother—a real mother—and she was happy. She had never felt more respectable and respected.

Stanislas looked at Criquette, and thought her much prettier than the young person who had made him spend so much money in Paris. He reflected that, with the aid of this charming girl, he could resign himself to live at Beauvais.

Tea was served; and Madame Rigaud very adroitly arranged it so as to leave Criquette and Stanislas together in a corner. They sat there side by side, now and then raising the cups of hot tea to their lips to keep themselves in countenance.

Criquette was thinking, "It is his place to speak first," and Stanislas was thinking, "How shall I begin?"

This sentence was in his mind:

"How pretty you are, and how I would like to marry you!"

If he had said this, who knows, perhaps things would have turned out quite differently; but it is scarcely proper to conduct matters so bluntly.

Stanislas at last summoned up his courage and, with evident effort, said to Criquette:

"This tea is very hot, Mademoiselle."

"Oh, yes, Monsieur, very hot."

"I think we shall be obliged to let it cool a little."

"I think so, Monsieur."

And this was all. With the same regular movement, they commenced to stir their little spoons about their cups, appearing absorbed in this interesting occupation, which, however, could not be prolonged indefinitely. After a few minutes, Stanislas, without raising his head, said to the young girl:

"It is not long since you left the convent, is it, Mademoiselle?"

"About six weeks, Monsieur."

"And you are not to return there again, Mademoiselle?"

"No, Monsieur."

The conversation for the second time came to a dead stop. Stanislas was profoundly discouraged, and he thought: "It is all over. I am lost. I shall never find anything else to say."

The tea had cooled somewhat, and they each took a little sip. Then Stanislas had a sudden inspiration.

"It has been very pleasant to-day, Mademoiselle."

"Yes, Monsieur."

"I had the pleasure of meeting you this afternoon."

"Yes, I know it, Monsieur."

This "I know it, Monsieur," was a slip. She

perceived at once that she had said something she ought not to have said. She should have pretended to know nothing. She should have answered. "Ah, really, Monsieur! And where was that?" So would have spoken a young girl of pure provincial birth, born with the instinct of middle class propriety, but such was not Criquette. Her unfortunate frankness had betrayed her. They were both greatly embarrassed. Stanislas mechanically moved his little spoon about his cup, and Criquette mechanically followed his example.

Father Meunier was watching them, and he whispered to Madame Rigaud:

"They are not getting on."

"No, they are not getting on. I think I shall be forced to go to their aid; but let us wait a little longer. The breaking the ice is always a little hard."

Criquette felt that she had made a mistake, and she knew that she ought to repair it. At all costs she must start the conversational ball rolling again, and so she asked, heroically:

"Do you usually live in Paris, Monsieur?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle, I have lived there for four years; but I come to Beauvais every summer for two months."

"Beauvais is less gay than Paris?"

"A little less."

"Are there many pleasures in Paris?"

"Yes, certainly. The races, the theatres—"

"The theatres! Do you go often to the theatre in Paris?"

"Very often."

This word *theatre* aroused Criquette to something approaching animation. Then Stanislas, delighted to have found at last a subject for conversation, continued:

"Yes, very often, Mademoiselle. Why, the evening before I left I went to the Porte-Saint-Martin."

"The Porte-Saint-Martin!" repeated Criquette, looking up for the first time.

"Yes, Mademoiselle."

"And what were they playing there?"

"A fairy piece."

"What was the name of it?"

"'The White Fawn.'"

"Was it pretty?"

"Very pretty."

"Tell me about it, will you?"

"Willingly."

Their embarrassment had disappeared. They both simultaneously placed their cups upon a small table, and approached a little nearer.

Madame Rigaud said to Aurélie:

"The ice is broken. Look!"

"Yes, I see—I see."

Stanislas proceeded to tell Criquette the plot of the piece.

"There is a young princess, who has been changed into a fawn while she was crossing the forest of sycamores; then, *Prince Charming* is obliged to go to the bottom of the sea to recover a talisman which he has lost and which has been

swallowed by the queen of the fishes. He addresses himself to the king of the fishes, the salmon; and this part was played by a very funny actor—Bidache."

"Bidache!"

"Yes, Bidache."

Criquette, half-unconsciously. repeated the name again.

"Bidache!"

"A queer name, is it not?"

"Yes, very queer—very queer," she answered, slowly and gravely.

"Then the scene changes to the kingdom of vegetables. *Cantelope LXVI.* gives the prince a marvelous herb, specially adapted to cure the wounds of fawns—for I have not told you the fawn has been wounded—and the prince delivers the fawn at the very moment she is about to become the prey of lions at the court of an African princess."

At this moment, Stanislas perceived that Criquette was no longer listening. Her thoughts were elsewhere. The memories of her childhood suddenly came back to her, evoked by this name of Bidache. The Porte-Saint-Martin! "Gri-Gri!" Those four months during which she had lived beneath skies of painted canvas, and in palaces of pasteboard, those four months became to her the luminous point of her life. Mignon regretted her country.

Once more very nervous, Stanislas, to awaken Criquette's attention, repeated:

"At the court of an African princess—at the court of an African princess."

"Ah, yes, pardon me; you said 'at the court of an African princess.'"

A question had been burning on her lips for some instants. She could not resist the temptation, and lowering her voice, she said:

"Among the actors, was there not one named Pascal?"

"Pascal? No, Mademoiselle, I do not think so. But why do you ask me that?"

She was embarrassed, and saw that she would be forced to lie, which was a terrible thing to her.

"Why," she said, "when I was quite a little girl they took me to see a play at the Porte-Saint-Martin, and there was an actor in it named Pascal who amused me very much, and so I asked you—"

"Pascal? No, I certainly do not remember that name."

Criquette had become very serious, and Stanislas found nothing more to say. He looked at Criquette, and the more he looked at her the more pretty and charming he thought her. Criquette's eyes were fixed on vacancy. She saw Pascal again.

Madame Rigaud never lost sight of them. "For a first interview," she said to herself, "things have gone admirably; but the conversation seems to be languishing just now. I must interrupt them."

This was not difficult, for they were not talk-

ing now; besides, it was eleven o'clock, and it was time to go. The two young people could meet the next evening at another house.

Aurélie, Madame Guarena, and Criquette returned home on foot. The distance was short. The mortgage clerk asked the ladies for permission to escort them to their door. During the walk he bore all the burden of the conversation. He was thinking of turning his voice to account and studying for the stage. His father was opposed to it, and had obtained him a position in the municipal government. It was more respectable, of course, but still if he could enter the Paris Opera, which was subventioned by the government, it was almost like being a functionary.

Madame Guarena was the only one who listened to him with interest. Criquette was absorbed in very serious thoughts. Aurélie was impatient to hear from the young girl what had been said in that conversation which for the time being had been so animated; so she accompanied Criquette to her room, and when they were alone, with the door closed, she said to her:

"Well, how did you like that young man?"

"Why, I can scarcely form an opinion of a person whom I saw this evening for the first time, and with whom I talked for only a quarter of an hour."

"You appeared to get along wonderfully well together. What were you talking about?"

"What were we talking about?"

"Yes."

"Well, I will tell you very frankly. I must speak the truth. I lied to him, and it was very painful to me."

"You lied to him?"

"Yes, lied. He told me that he went some two or three weeks ago to the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre."

"The Porte-Saint-Martin theatre!"

"Yes; and he saw there a fairy-piece. Then I could not help asking him if among the actors who played in the piece there was one named Pascal."

"Pascal!"

"Yes, Pascal. But do not be alarmed. I repaired it all by a very clever little lie. Monsieur Meunier was surprised, and wanted to know why I asked him such a question, and I told him that I had once seen a play at that theatre, and had been very much amused by an actor named Pascal."

"It would have been better to have avoided any necessity for falsehood."

"I shall not place myself in such a position again. I shall not lie. I am resolved upon that; so strongly resolved that, if I see that young man again, I am determined to tell him that I acted, when I was a little girl, a child's part in a fairy-piece at the Porte-Saint-Martin."

"You are mad!"

"No, I am not mad. Let me speak, please. What I am about to say to you, I have wanted to say for a long time, and it must be said sooner

or later. You ordered me to be silent at the convent in regard to my past, in order not to expose myself to the jests of my school-fellows."

"And I still order you to be silent. You would expose yourself now to the jests of the world, which are more cruel still."

"I have kept my promise up to the present moment; but to-day the situation is no longer the same. I find myself introduced to a young man who, it seems, wishes to marry me. It seems to me that I have no longer the right to be silent, and that I ought to tell him the truth."

"You can tell your husband whatever you like after your marriage, but not before. Afterward, he can not escape."

These last words, which unmasked the true Aurélie, were like a knife-thrust in Criquette's heart. Aurélie immediately regretted having allowed them to escape her, but she was unstrung and nervous—she who was ordinarily so calm, so completely mistress of herself. She was surprised to find, all at once, before her a woman instead of a child.

There was a moment of silence. Criquette was reflecting, and it was some little time before she answered:

"What you have said to me does not change my resolution. I have done nothing bad, it seems to me, when I was a child; so why should I be silent?"

"If you have done nothing bad, why speak?"

"For a very simple reason. I am no longer a

little girl; I am seventeen years old. You have given me a good education. I have been brought up, thanks to you, by excellent women who have taught me what was meant by duty; and I am convinced that it is my duty to speak. To-morrow, then, for I understand that I am to see this young man again to-morrow evening—"

"Yes, you were to see him again to-morrow evening," answered Aurélie, who had her eyes fixed on Criquette, and was listening to her very attentively.

"To-morrow evening I will go to this young man, or, if you prefer it, and that is what I should prefer myself, to his mother, and tell all there is to tell concerning myself. Of you, I shall say nothing. It is I that he is going to marry, not you."

"One moment, my child; I do not understand those last words. You promise not to say anything of me. What is there that can be said of me? What have you to reproach me with?"

"Nothing. On the contrary, I owe you gratitude—much gratitude. But—and I beg you to pardon me—explain to me why my gratitude weighs upon me, why I know you so little, you whom I ought to know so well; why you have never spoken to me of your father or your mother. Pardon me, I implore, but I feel that I am surrounded by things I do not understand, and that I would like to understand."

"Go on, if you have not said all; I will answer afterward."

"No, I have not said all; and what remains to be said is the most difficult of all. You wish me to marry, and I do not refuse to marry, if this young man loves me, and if I, in my turn, can love him a little. You acknowledge, I suppose, that that is necessary. One should not marry without love. If I marry, it is you who will give me my dowry, and a very large one. But—my memory deceives me, perhaps, I was so young; and besides, there is nothing wrong in occupying a very humble position—but when you were with Mademoiselle Rosita—"

At this, all Aurélie's apparent composure forsook her.

"You wretched child, never dare to pronounce that name again; do you understand? Never!"

She seized Criquette violently by both hands, and repeated:

"Never that name! Do you understand? Never!"

She was very strong, and her grasp bruised Criquette's hands. The girl turned frightfully pale.

Aurélie brusquely released her.

"I was wrong," she said. "It is foolish to lose one's temper; it does no good."

For some minutes she walked in silence up and down the chamber. Criquette looked at her hands, which were beginning to turn black and blue.

Aurélie stopped at last before Criquette's dressing-table, bathed her face with a little water, and

then continued for some minutes her promenade. Then, addressing Criquette at a little distance—she did not dare to come near her, for fear she should lose control of herself again—she said:

"You shall not leave this room until you have promised me to marry that young man, if he really wishes you for a wife, and never to say a word of your past—of our past, you understand—either before or after your marriage."

"I will never promise that."

"We shall see. Night brings counsel. Good-night."

Aurélie took out the key, left the room, and Criquette heard her lock the door on the outside.

X.

Criquette slept well, like a brave little woman who has done her duty and whose heart is at peace. She had tasted to the full the pleasure of asserting herself, after a long oppression, and of freely expressing her real sentiments.

Aurélie did not sleep. Such resistance, such obstinacy! And why? She did not understand, she could not understand. She had wished to save the child from the theatrical life whose dangers she knew so well. Rosita was considered to be one of the fortunate and brilliant ones of her profession; but how many deceptions, miseries, and troubles she had to cope with. From all that, she had wished to preserve this young girl. She was on the eve of attaining her end. She offered her peace and fortune, and Criquette, instead of thanking her, rebelled, threatened to ruin her, and to overthrow the scaffolding, so laboriously erected, of a respected life, reconquered at the cost of so many calculations, so many struggles.

And those romantic ideas in the head of that child! That need of loving and being loved! Criquette had said to her: "You acknowledge, I suppose, that to marry, love is necessary." No, she did not acknowledge that. Love to rank above the proprieties? Never! The proprieties first, and

then love, if there remains a little place for it in a corner. Such had been nine-tenths of the marriages Aurélie had seen arranged at Beauvais during the last six years. The greater part had turned out tol·rably well; but the marriages of love had almost all resulted badly, for they almost all began in poverty, which is the worst of evils. Besides, Aurélie had had some experience in love. She remembered Pierre Grassou and that long martyrdom of four years.

In the middle of the night, Aurélie rose and walked up and down her chamber. In all probability she would soon find Criquette resigned and obedient; but if she found the same obstinacy, she knew what she would do. She would never submit to be conquered by that child. Just before day-break, worn out with fatigue, she closed her eyes, and for two or three hours slept an uneasy slumber.

She was awakened by Thérèse, the little maid, who entered her chamber to open the shutters.

"Mademoiselle Céline is not very well this morning," said Aurélie. "She will not be able to go down to breakfast. Bring me her chocolate at once upon a waiter. I will take it to her myself."

"Very well, Mademoiselle."

A few minutes after, Aurélie entered Criquette's chamber. Criquette was sound asleep. Aurélie placed the waiter upon a table, and approaching the bed, scrutinized the sleeping girl.

"So!" she muttered; "does that child think herself stronger than I? We shall see."

She touched Criquette lightly on the shoulder. The girl stirred and awoke, fresh and rosy, her little head on the white pillow half-buried in its masses of disheveled black hair. As she caught sight of Aurélie, she sat up in bed and with both hands threw back her hair.

"You have slept well, it seems?"

"Yes; very well."

"And did you sleep well all night?"

"Yes."

"Then you have had no time to reflect on what passed between us last evening."

"This morning, no; but last night, yes, a little before I went to sleep."

As she spoke, Criquette leaped out of bed, thrust her little naked feet into her slippers, and threw a dressing-gown over her shoulders.

"And have you changed your resolution?"

"Not in the least."

"You are quite sure?"

"Perfectly."

"Do you care to think it over a little more this morning?"

"It would be quite useless."

"For my part, I have not slept. I spent the night in reflection. You did considerable talking last evening; I, very little. Do you remember all that you said?"

"Yes, very well."

"Try, then, to remember equally well what I am about to say to you in my turn. You will have plenty of time to reflect on it. You have

been frank, and I will be equally so. Your memory has not deceived you. Yes, we both lived in the house of Mademoiselle Rosita, who was an actress and a woman of no character. You passed several months there, and I long years. I was her maid, and it was in that way I made a fortune. Are you satisfied? Is there anything else that you desire to know?"

"Yes, there is one thing."

"Speak! I will answer you."

"Was Mademoiselle Rosita the one who first took care of me?"

"Yes."

"Yes, I recollect. It is a little confused in my mind, but still I recollect. The night of mamma's death, Mademoiselle Rosita took me away in her carriage, and I slept that night in her room upon a sofa."

"Yes."

"Why have I never heard anything of her? Is she dead?"

"No."

"What has become of her?"

"Do you remember a Russian prince?"

"Yes, who stepped on my hand one day when I was playing with a little dog."

"Exactly. Well, this prince—he was called Prince Savéline; you see I tell you all—this prince married Mademoiselle Rosita, and died soon after. She is therefore a rich widow and a princess."

"Has Mademoiselle Rosita ever tried to know

what has become of me since you took charge of me?"

"Yes; but I arranged it so that all relations between us should be broken."

"It was easy, however. She must have known that you were at Beauvais."

"She did not know it. She thought I was at Lyons."

"And Pascal?"

Aurélie hesitated.

"I ask you if Pascal knew where I was?"

"He did not know."

"And he thought me at Lyons?"

"Yes."

"You deceived him, then?"

"Yes."

"And he also tried to know what had become of me?"

"Yes, at first; but not for the last four years."

"Do you know where Pascal is?"

"No."

"Not even if he is alive?"

"No. I have not troubled myself about him."

"But how do you know that Mademoiselle Rosita is living?"

"Because I read not long ago, in a Paris paper, that she was building a villa at Nice."

"And she was not a good woman?"

"No."

"Yet she was good to me."

"It was her whim to be so."

"That makes no difference. If I should meet

her some day, even were I on the arm of my husband, and if she recognized me and came to me and recalled what she once did for me—she received me when I was poor and alone in the world, and I owe her gratitude—it would be my duty to thank her. You see that I must tell all, before marriage, to the man who wishes to make me his wife. Afterward, he might reproach me for having deceived him, and I am not willing that that should happen."

"Ah! you insist upon that?"

"I will tell no more lies. And, by the way, I can understand and appreciate why you separated me from Mademoiselle Rosita. But Pascal—why from Pascal?"

"Because Pascal and Rosita were both connected with theatrical life—Bohemian life. I suppose that is what you would like! Well, you shall not have it. That I have not led a perfect life myself is possible; but in all that concerns you I have acted wisely and well. I wish you to lead, near me, a tranquil, honored life, sheltered from need and trouble. Is it culpable to wish that?"

"To wish to bring it about by a lie—yes."

"And so you would proclaim through Beauvais—"

"I would proclaim nothing through Beauvais; and stay—that I do not speak, that I never speak, may be easily arranged. Let there be no more question of my marriage. Let me become a nun. That is not theatrical life; that is not Bo-

hemia. And at the convent I swear to you that I will never say anything, not even to my confessor. If that is wrong, God will pardon it."

"You shall not enter the convent. I will prevent it. I have the same control of you that a mother would have."

"A mother!"

"And I will force you to marry this young man."

"Without speaking, no."

"Ah! you said yesterday that you did not know me; nor did I know you. You have strength of character; so have I. We shall see who will yield the first."

"It will not be I."

"Nor I. At noon, I will bring you your breakfast. Reflect! You will not be disturbed in your reflections, I promise you."

She left the room, locking the door behind her.

"Well," thought Criquette, "I asked for the convent, and I have it. I am going to live here all alone, in a cell. I shall not be bored. All alone? I have Pierrot, and I will talk with him through the window."

She had heard Pierrot bark outside. He was calling her. He was always there, beneath her window, when she awoke. She breakfasted with a very good appetite, throwing Pierrot half of her bread. She had never felt freer or more light-hearted.

Aurélie sought Madame Guarena and summoned Thérèse.

"Céline is not well this morning," she said to them; "I alone will enter her room and bring her her meals. If anyone asks for her, say that she is ill; and that is not all, you will both take care not to go into that part of the garden which is beneath Céline's window. I insist upon that."

They both bowed. It was well. What Aurélie said was always well. When she had spoken, no one in the house held a contrary opinion. Aurélie had been a servant, and she knew how to rule servants.

Four days passed. Aurélie brought Criquette her chocolate in the morning, her breakfast at noon, and her dinner at night.

Every evening as she was about to go, she said:

"Still no?"

"Still no."

Criquette was not unhappy. She had some embroidery, and from morning till night she worked. She had also Pierrot, who passed entire hours under her window, seated with his nose in the air, looking at her, and seeming to say:

"Why don't you come down? What are you doing up there? Come out! Go and sit on your bench; I will put my head on your knees, and we will be happy."

But on the afternoon of the third day Aurélie discovered that Pierrot was Criquette's faithful companion. That was a distraction for the prisoner and must be removed; so, before Criquette's eyes, she herself took Pierrot away. The dog

resisted, but had to obey; and Criquette heard Aurélie say to Thérèse:

"Keep Pierrot chained up through the day, and release him only at night."

And, moreover, Aurélie had seen Criquette at the window. The garden was not large, and from the adjoining houses other persons could see the young girl, who, a little out of bravado, showed a merry, laughing face. These persons would not believe in Criquette's illness, and it was necessary that they should believe in it.

Madame Rigaud came every day to inquire for Criquette; young Stanislas wanted to see her again—spoke only of her, thought only of her. Aurélie answered that Criquette was unwell. "Nothing serious," she added; "it is needless for Doctor Rigaud to call for so slight a matter" But she must take all precautions to prevent Criquette being seen; so she made an additional call on her ward in the afternoon. She appeared carrying a chain and padlock. She passed the chain through the slats of the shutters and fastened it with the padlock, which was a very strong one.

Criquette could open the window, but not the shutters. She would not be seen any more.

The sixth day Criquette's supply of embroidery silk was exhausted. She was of an active temperament, and while she had no fear of solitude, she shuddered at the thought of idleness. No more work possible! She summoned up courage in the evening to say very humbly to Aurélie:

"I have no more silks. If you could give me some I should be very grateful."

Aurélie had not thought of that—to prevent her working!

"You shall have no more silks."

She seized Criquette's work-basket, containing the embroidery, and carried away everything—scissors, needles, and all.

What was to become of Criquette? Anxiety took possession of her for the first time. She no longer had her poor embroidery, no longer her poor dog. Fortunately, she found in one of the bureau drawers two books, both masterpieces: "The Imitation of Christ" and "Paul and Virginia." She had placed the two volumes there during the Easter vacation, and thought she had returned them to the little book-case in the *salon*.

She kissed the two books over and over again. She was saved, for she had something to read. But she must not allow her godmother to suspect that she had the books, or they would share the fate of the embroidery.

Criquette had no watch, and her clock was out of order, but she could hear the big clock of the cathedral sound the hours, the halves, and the quarters; that gratification Aurélie could not deprive her of—she could not stop the cathedral clock. Half an hour before Aurélie's visits, Criquette hid the two volumes.

Those two volumes, both so ardent, so passionate! Both speaking of love, but not of the same love.

This is what the young girl read in "The Imitation of Christ:" "Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing is stronger, more elevating, more satisfying; there is nothing better, nothing so perfect on earth or in heaven, because love is born of God and should be given to God beyond all other creatures. When one loves, he runs, he flies; he is in ecstasy; he is free, and nothing can curb him. The ardor of a soul on fire with love rises to God, as with a great cry: My God! My love! Thou art all mine, and I am all thine!"

Everywhere was the same language, the same enthusiasm, the same exaltation. "There is no love except in me, thy Lord and thy God! Seek death before death, and thou wilt find life. Come to me! Be all mine!"

And so, on the eighth day of her captivity, Criquette, after having lived in that book from morning till evening, said to Aurélie, when she came to extinguish her candle:

"I beg you, let me enter the convent."

"No."

But the next day, the ninth day, Criquette opened "Paul and Virginia." She was suddenly brought down from heaven to earth; she read and re-read it; she learned by heart Paul's burning declaration to Virginia:

"When I am weary, the sight of you refreshes me. When, from the top of the mountain, I see you at the bottom of this valley, you appear to me like a rosebud among the vines. Although I lose sight of you among the trees, I do not need

to see you to find you again; something of you, which I can not explain, remains in the air where you have passed, upon the grass where you have sat. When I approach you, you delight my senses. If I touch you only with the tip of my finger, all my being trembles with pleasure."

Then Criquette longed to live, longed to love. She thought no more of God. She thought of Pascal. She remembered that he had said to her: "When we grow up we will love each other and be married." To have separated her from Pascal—from Pascal, who had not forgotten her! That is what she could not pardon Aurélie, that is what gave her firmness and courage. She would never yield!

If Pascal were only there! How old must Pascal be? He was older than she—not much, but a little; so, if he is not dead, he is a man to-day. And if he were there, perhaps to touch her with the tip of his finger would—

It was thus that the poor child fluttered between heaven and earth. Moreover, her thoughts were beginning to be vague and undecided. It was now eight days that she had been imprisoned. She no longer ate. She had nightmares in her sleep. To-day at about four o'clock she felt frightfully weary. She could read no more. She let the book fall into her lap and fell asleep, just as the cathedral clock was striking four. Half-past four! Five! Criquette did not wake. Half-past five! She was still asleep. Six! Aurélie came to bring the dinner; she saw the two

books and seized them, while Criquette in dismay exclaimed:

"Oh, no! Let me have them. Think! I shall have nothing—nothing at all!"

"Yield, then."

But Criquette had already recovered her courage.

"No, no, no!"

She had nothing now, nothing at all. The ninth day passed, and the tenth, and the eleventh, and the twelfth. Sustained by a nervous strength, Criquette for hours at a time paced up and down her chamber like an imprisoned animal. Then she fell exhausted into an arm-chair; and then, to occupy her mind, she counted the little roses profusely strewn over the wall-paper. There were four hundred and forty, or fifty, or sixty; she never arrived at the same total.

Through the slats of the blinds, she took care to cast after each meal little pellets of bread for the birds. That at least brought something living beneath her window.

The thirteenth day, Aurèlie came in the morning, and found Criquette so pale and listless that she could not repress a feeling of pity.

"Are you ill?"

Criquette raised her head.

"Ill? No, no. I am very well.'

After Aurélie had departed, Criquette rose. She could scarcely walk. What was to be done? Then she discovered that by mounting upon a chair she could see, through the slats of the

blinds, into the court of a factory which was to the left, on the other side of the wall. The wind blew to and fro the smoke of the big brick chimney. Criquette watched this smoke; it was a sort of occupation. Then came workmen and girls, who proceeded to hang, on posts in the court, immense pieces of red cloth. Their task completed, one of the men tried to kiss one of the girls, who defended herself. Their comrades formed a circle around this little battle, which had nothing of the tragic in it. The man was the stronger; he seized the girl in his arms and planted a big kiss on her cheek. They all laughed, beginning with the victim.

Her position on the chair was very fatiguing, and Criquette descended. What should she do? What should she do? Count the little roses? She could not do it any more. It seemed to her that her eyesight was dim. She opened mechanically, without knowing why, the door of a little closet filled with dresses and trunks. About the height of one's head there were shelves, with boxes of all sorts upon them.

One of these boxes attracted Criquette's attention, recalled something to her. What? She did not know. At last she remembered. The box contained a doll given her, the evening of the hundredth representation, by the authors of "Gri-Gri." If the doll was there, she would play with it, dress it and undress it. Her head was so weak. She had become a child again, and the idea of having a doll delighted her. She was

about to mount upon a chair to take down the box, when she heard twelve o'clock strike. Her godmother would be there presently. She closed the door of the closet. It was better to wait.

And when Aurélie had gone, without touching her breakfast, Criquette mounted upon the chair again and took down the box. How heavy it was! She could scarcely carry it. It was not the doll, the box would not be so heavy.

But it was the doll, all the same, and with the doll a crowd of little playthings which, the eve of her departure, Aurélie had thrown in by chance; for most part, broken remnants of toys, puppets, a game of loto, jack-straws, dominos, etc.

For two hours Criquette, seated upon the floor, played with the doll. She dressed and undressed it, she arranged its hair, she made it walk, dance, and bow. Then she examined the other toys, first the dominos, which were all in disorder in their wooden box. She took them out one by one, counted them, and suddenly, at the bottom of the box, she perceived a little porte-monnaie.

Ah! the porte-monnaie; she recognized it at once, and her heart leaped for joy. It was that cheap little porte-monnaie Pascal had given her, which she had lost and grieved over so. Dear porte-monnaie! She kissed it again and again! But her joy was followed by despair. The tears rolled down her cheeks as she thought of Pascal. The fit of weeping, however, did her good—relieved her brain. Her head felt lighter, her

thoughts were clearer, and suddenly she remembered there was money in that porte-monnaie! Much money, given her by a king. She opened it, and there were the two pieces of money which had slept there for six years. Money! She had money! She rose; all her strength of mind and body returned to her. If she could escape, take the railroad, and reach Paris!

In the early days of her captivity, she had thought much of escaping. It did not appear to her impossible; but without money what could she do. Paris was twenty leagues away, and it was impossible to walk; but now she could take the railway.

It was beginning to grow dark, and Aurélie would come soon. Criquette put the doll and toys back in the box and hid the box itself in the closet. Pascal's porte-monnaie and the money were in her pocket. She had eaten nothing since morning, but with the dawn of hope her appetite returned. She had just finished her breakfast when Aurélie appeared with her dinner.

The regular question was asked, "Still no?" and the usual answer given, "Still no."

At last she was alone. When her godmother should return, to-morrow morning at eight o'clock, she must be gone. She did not doubt the success of her undertaking. She commenced by going to bed at seven o'clock. She suspected Aurélie of coming at times to spy through the keyhole. She went to bed, but she did not sleep. She calmly reviewed all the details of her pro-

posed escape. She heard the cathedral clock strike the hours; how slowly they passed!

Finally, at three o'clock in the morning, she rose and listened. Not a sound in the house. Everyone was asleep. She put on a plain gray dress and stout shoes, so as to be able to walk comfortably. There were nearly two leagues to be traveled on foot that night. The brilliant moonlight gave her sufficient light.

The chain and padlock amounted to nothing. With her table-knife, she quickly cut through the slat around which the chain was passed, and could open the shutters. She threw a wrap over her shoulders, and fastened her hat to her head with two strong pins. She was perfectly calm and composed.

To descend from the window was nothing, either. Her room was on the first floor, and close to the window grew an enormous tree a hundred years old. She remembered playing "Hide and Go Seek" in the garden with Madame Rigaud's little girl and hiding in the leafy branches.

She crawled out of the window, and seizing a bough, found that it would bear her weight perfectly. The bright moonlight made her uneasy. If anyone should be at the window of the neighboring houses, she would be seen. But then, who was awake in Beauvais at that hour? Before descending, she fortunately remembered to close the blinds.

She descended very easily, but just as she was close to the ground she slipped and fell into a

mass of rose-bushes which was just below the window.

There was a slight noise of breaking branches, which was answered by the barking of a dog on the other side of the house. It was Pierrot, who had heard the noise and ran barking in that direction. He recognized Criquette, and continued to bark more furiously still, in his delight at seeing her again after so long a separation. He threw himself upon the young girl, whose skirts were caught by the long thorns of the roses. She succeeded at length in disentangling herself, but then she heard the noise of a window opening in her guardian's room. She was lost!

Fortunately, a few steps away was a very thick alley of lindens, which ran along the wall and led to the little gate through which Criquette intended to go. Before Aurélie had opened her blinds and appeared at the window, Criquette, followed by Pierrot, was able to reach this alley. She was completely hidden in the shade, but it was necessary to silence Pierrot. She leaned against the trunk of one of the lindens, the dog placed his two front paws upon her shoulders, and she put both her hands over his mouth to prevent his barking. They remained thus perfectly still, with their heads close together. Criquette whispered low in his ear:

"Be still, Pierrot, be still!"

Aurélie leaned out of the window and looked down into the garden, but she could neither see nor hear anything. Criquette thanked her lucky

stars that she had thought to close the blinds. Aurélie called:

"Pierrot! Pierrot!"

Criquette pressed with all her strength Pierrot's head in her hands, whispering:

"Be still, Pierrot, be still!"

And Pierrot was still. He was happy in the arms of his dear little mistress. Two or three minutes passed, which seemed an eternity to Criquette. The cathedral clock struck four. Aurélie closed her window, but Criquette remained for five or six minutes hidden behind the tree, with Pierrot's paws upon her shoulders.

Finally, she decided to continue her way, but bending over, with one hand still holding the dog. She had only one anxiety now. She knew that the key of the garden gate was kept hidden beneath a mat at the end of the alley. If the key should not be there! She raised the mat and, groping in the darkness, found the key.

All that remained now was to open the gate and separate from Pierrot. At the thought of leaving the dog, Criquette's eyes filled with tears. She would have taken him with her if he had not been so big, but under the circumstances it was not to be thought of. She kissed Pierrot ten or twelve times, as one would kiss a child, then she put the key in the lock and opened the door; but Pierrot struggled in his desire to go with her. It took all her courage to repulse the poor animal.

At last Criquette is free; but behind the closed gate she can hear the complaints of the only friend she leaves in that house.

XI.

The theatrical agency, under the direction of Monsieur Carmelle, has been installed for half a century in an old, gloomy house of the Rue de Louvois.

How many sopranos and tenors, how many comedians and *tragediennes*, have ascended the damp, dark staircase which leads to the office of the agency! How many Ruy Blas and Lucrezia Borgias! How many Fernandos and Leonoras! How many old colonels and young widows of Scribe's comedies! How many Giboyers and Dalilas! How many Perrichons and Marguérite Gauthiers! How many Adrienne Lecouvreurs and Marquises de la Seiglière! How many Indianas and Charlemagnes!

It is from here that have been sent in great haste, and without being warranted, to all provincial directors in embarrassment, tenors and baritones, singers of grand opera and singers of opera-bouffe, leading men, juveniles, first old men and first old women, low comedians, utility men, comic old men and old women no less comic, and *ingénues* of all degrees.

And all these, spreading themselves over the surface of France, Europe, and the two Americas, under the form of dramas, operas, vaudevilles, and operettas, have let loose upon the world

screams, displays of anger, assassinations, buffooneries, poisonings, punning burlesques, lies, marriages of inclination and marriages of convenience, suicides, family quarrels, prayers, threats, anathemas, frights, practical jokes, ecstasies, drunken scenes, mad scenes, paternal curses, feminine coquetries, serenades, balcony-scalings, ambuscades, sword-thrusts, pistol-shots, Platonic passions and those that are anything but Platonic, vows to die rather than be unfaithful, farewells to life and happiness, quarrels and reconciliations, lost wills, thefts, reveries under the starry skies, invocations to love, glory and honor; in short, all that can be sung, all that can be declaimed, all that can be danced, all that is pathetic, all that is humorous, all that deserves to be applauded, all that deserves to be hissed, all that can give rise to burning declarations, tender *barcarolles*, comic songs, tirades, and dialogues of every description.

This great commission-house of dramatic exportation has its offices on the first floor; you enter a large room where a clerk is seated before a table covered with letters, telegrams, photographs, and theatrical journals.

Behind the clerk's desk are two lithographs, one representing Talma as *Augustus*, with these words from "Cinna" below:

Sit, Cinna, sit, and listen carefully to the commands I place upon thee.

The other representing Grassot as *Punch*, with these two words beneath:

Gnouf! Gnouf!

Lithographs and inscriptions full of eloquence! How much in a few words! A whole lecture on history and dramatic literature! For the patrons of the agency, here is the choice between two branches, the way open to all talents, all ambitions. One can follow in the footsteps of Talma, or in those of Grassot.

A case, divided into twenty little compartments, bears these inscriptions: "Leading comedians, juveniles, soubrettes," etc. On each side of the case are advertisements of perfumery, rouge, theatrical materials, wardrobes to sell, etc.

It was at the door of this theatrical agency that Criquette knocked the morning of September 29, 1866. Her journey had been a roundabout one, and full of complications; but she had conducted her enterprise with the cool calculation of an old criminal accustomed to escapes. She never once dreamed of taking the seven o'clock train at Beauvais; she might be recognized, stopped, and taken back to Aurélie. She therefore walked three miles to Rochy-Condé, the first station on the line to Paris.

She knew the country, and alone on the highway she walked with a firm step, knowing neither fear nor fatigue. The moon had disappeared, but the stars still spangled the sky. Criquette drank in the fresh air with delight; she was born again, she lived again, she had free space before her, and hope at the end of the road. One by one the stars grew dim and disappeared; it was day, and

about six o'clock Criquette arrived at Rochy-Condé.

She bought a ticket for the last station this side of Paris—Saint-Denis. At eight o'clock Aurélie would enter her room and her flight would be discovered; the train was not due in Paris until half-past nine, therefore there would be time for a telegram to overtake her, and she would run a serious danger at the Paris station; but at Saint-Denis there was nothing to fear.

The fare, third-class, was only four francs, so she had left thirty-six francs, with which amount she could go, third-class, to the limits of France to find Pascal; that was her chief desire, her chief hope.

At Saint-Denis she took an omnibus which brought her to Paris. The passengers laughed and talked, and after the long silence to which she had been condemned, the sound of human voices was delightful to her. She recognized the fauborgs of Paris, and the streets where she had rambled with Pascal. She saw the posters of the theatres, and read, in colossal letters, "The White Fawn," which recalled to her mind her conversation with young Stanislas.

The omnibus stopped in the Rue Saint-Denis, near the boulevard. In the crowd of people and carriages Criquette was for a moment dismayed; but, like the little Parisian she was, she tried to find her way for herself. She did not succeed, however, and being forced to inquire, she chose a respectable-looking old gentleman; but one can

not be too careful in Paris, and respectable-looking old gentlemen are no better than anyone else.

"Would you have the kindness, Monsieur, to tell me the way to the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre?"

"It is only a step or two, and if you will come with me I will show you."

"No, please; just tell me how to get there."

"Turn to your left, and you will see the theatre."

She no longer walks; she runs. She knows where she is now. There is the Rue de Bondy and the stage door. She enters the room of the *conçierge*, and finds that good dame resting in a big arm-chair.

"I beg your pardon, Madame."

The *conçierge* turned, looked at her—looked again, with evident surprise, and then suddenly exclaimed:

"Why, it is Criquette!"

"You recognize me, and yet I should not have recognized you."

"Ah! but I have not your eyes. Could one forget those eyes? It is so queer, too, that you should turn up this morning, for there was someone here yesterday who was speaking of you."

"Of me! Who was it?"

"Your old friend Pascal. Don't you remember?"

Remember! Pascal was here yesterday! And he had not forgotten her! She threw her arms about the neck of the *conçierge* and kissed her, a

little for her own sake, to be sure, but more—much more—for Pascal.

Questions poured forth from Criquette's lips. Yes, Pascal was there yesterday, and he had talked to the stage-manager about her. The address—Pascal's address? The *conçierge* did not know it, but as he went away he said that he was going to sign an engagement for Mans at the Carmelle agency; and the *conçierge* knew the address of the agency—28 Rue de Louvois.

Criquette hastened away. As she came out of the theatre she almost ran into the respectable-looking old gentleman, who was walking up and down in front of the stage door; she stepped quickly aside and hastened away. In half an hour she was seated upon a sofa of frayed velvet, beside a woman of about forty, with a painted, faded face, dressed in an old soiled dress of gray silk. The clerk of the agency had said to Criquette:

"Have the kindness to wait a minute. After I have done with Monsieur and Madame, I am at your service."

Monsieur was a tall, pale, thin young man. His interview with the clerk was drawing to a close.

"So," said the clerk, "you failed at Béziers?"

"Yes, I failed; but I must tell you why. I had come from Nancy, where I was engaged last season as second tenor. They have taste in the North, so I got into the habit of singing with taste, and that is what killed me at Béziers.

Those Southerners are all squallers, and to please them, you must squall. Now, as I had taste, I did not squall, and they hissed me the first night. They might have had a little patience. I could have learned to squall as well as anyone. The habit of singing with taste is lost as easily as acquired."

"In short, you failed at Béziers?" said the clerk, who went straight to the point in question, and appeared little disposed to listen to the tenor's disquisition on taste.

"Well, yes, I failed."

"And you want a position as light tenor?"

"Yes."

"Return at four o'clock. There is a place open at Rennes, and the manager will be here then."

"I should rather like Rennes. They must have taste in Rennes. Be sure and tell the manager that what ruined me at Béziers was because—"

"Yes, yes. Good-day."

It was now the turn of Criquette's neighbor; and the following conversation took place between her and the clerk:

"Are you one of the patrons of the agency?"

"Yes."

"Did we obtain an engagement for you last year?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At Bourges."

"Your name is—"

"Louise Jacquot, but I am known on the stage as Pauline Bruvère."

"You did not renew your engagement at Bourges?"

"No."

"What was your salary?"

"Three hundred francs a month."

"And you would like—"

"At least as much as that."

"What is your line of business?"

"Juveniles."

"Ah!"

And after that "ah!" the clerk raised his eyes to the face of the poor woman, who understood the meaning of the look, for she hastened to say:

"I have always played juvenile parts."

"I don't deny it. Well, call again to-morrow. Have you a photograph?"

"Yes, here is one."

"Rather old, isn't it?"

"No, it was taken last year."

"Ah!"

"Last year, I assure you."

"Return to-morrow at three. I will tell you then if there is anything possible for you."

She rose, and Criquette was about to take her place, when the poor juvenile lady turned again to the clerk and said:

"If it were absolutely necessary, I would change my line and play the young mothers."

"I think it would be wiser."

"Well, do the best you can for me," she answered, resignedly.

She went away slowly, very slowly, and as she went, she looked at Criquette. Ah! if she had that face and those eyes, she would not be obliged to take the young mothers.

"It is your turn now, Mademoiselle," said the clerk to Criquette. "Ah! now *you* have the appearance for juveniles, if you care to play them."

"I did not come for an engagement, Monsieur. I wanted to obtain an address."

"What address?"

"The address of a young man who signed a contract here yesterday; I think for Mans— Monsieur Pascal."

"Possibly; but we do not give addresses."

"You don't give them! Oh, Monsieur, if you knew why I ask you for it. He is a friend whom I have not seen for six years. Please tell me where I can find him."

What a thing it is to be pretty and have bright eyes!

"She can't be a creditor!" thought the clerk.

So he gave Criquette the address: Hôtel de Calais, 7 Rue de Cléry.

"Oh, thanks, Monsieur, thanks!"

She was already at the door.

"I repeat: if you care to do so, you can obtain an engagement on your appearance alone."

"Who knows, Monsieur? Perhaps; but meanwhile a thousand thanks."

She hastened away and hurried along the boulevards. She was not in the least tired. It seemed to her that to find Pascal she could go on foot to the other end of the world.

But her heart beat very quickly when she perceived a sign with these words: "Hôtel de Calais." At the right, in a narrow, dark alley, was the office of the landlady. She was absorbed in a cheap story-paper when Criquette asked her, in a trembling voice:

"Is Monsieur Pascal in?"

"Monsieur Pascal? Wait a moment and I will tell you."

She glanced up at the key-board.

"His key is not here, so he must be in his room—third floor, second door to the right, No. 29."

While Criquette was ascending the stairs, a tall, fair-haired young man was walking up and down the floor of No. 29; and as he walked, he gesticulated and declaimed aloud. He was repeating to himself the part of the *Duke de Montmeyran* in "Monsieur Poirier's Son-in-law." He was trying to fix in his head the following sentences:

"Those patriotic ideas at which we laugh in Parisian cafés make the heart beat wonderfully quick when in face of the enemy. The first sound of the cannon silences criticism, and the flag is no longer a bit of rag at the end of a pole, but the imperial insignia of our fatherland."

As Pascal for the third time was repeating this speech, "Those patriotic ideas," etc., he heard some one knock at the door.

"Come in," he said. "Come in."

The knob turned, the door opened, and there were two simultaneous exclamations:

"Criquette!"

"Pascal!"

Already they were in one another's arms.

Those six years that had passed without their seeing each other no longer counted—no longer existed. It seemed to them that they had separated only yesterday. Their old affection had no need to be awakened. It had remained the same. The same? No, not entirely. It was already sweeter and stronger, for from that first embrace, those first kisses, their friendship became love.

Like those rosebuds sent from Nice to Paris in hermetically sealed boxes, until the end of a long journey in the darkness of their prison they remain buds, even closing still tighter; but when the little box is opened, when the poor flowers recover the light and air that they need, in an instant they begin to live again, and they burst forth into bloom in all their glory—such was Criquette! She had found again light, warmth, sunshine. Her heart opened! She loved! She was beloved!

But although Pascal and Criquette had had time to recognize one another, they had not had time to see one another. The same thought came to them at the same time, and the same desire.

They drew away from one another, and, face to face, hand in hand, they gazed and gazed, and then kissed again. There must have been many kisses in that old room of that old Paris house, but such happy kisses, never!

There was then a torrent of words. How many things they had to tell each other! Six years to relate! Their separated lives to join and bind together again! They began to talk incoherently, confusedly, as memories crowded in upon their brains. Their first meeting in Belleville, the quarrel with the big girl, the little cakes they sold, their début at the Porte-Saint-Martin, the *Princess Colibri*, the fifteen-sou monkey, Rosita, Aurélie, their separation, Pascal's journey to Lyons and that poor little book which Criquette had never received, Dieppe, Beauvais, the Convent of Sainte-Marie, the prizes of the Conservatory, young Stanislas Meunier, the Vichy theatre, the porte-monnaie recovered, Pierrot, Criquette's flight, and finally the chance which, after a long separation, had united them upon that sofa in a hotel room.

Criquette pressed closely to Pascal, repeating:

"I am no longer alone! I am no longer alone! For you will never leave me, will you—never?"

"No, never."

"I have been too much alone the last six years, since I lost you; and I am so happy to have found you. Tell me, tell me again, that you will never leave me."

"Never! Never!"

"Thank you," she said, laughing; "but to make it sure, we must be married at once."

"Married!"

"Yes, certainly. What would become of me, Pascal, if you did not marry me? I have only you in all the world."

This was said so sweetly and innocently that Pascal knelt at her feet, and kissing her two little hands, said:

"Whatever you wish, Criquette; whatever you wish."

How happy she was! She felt that she had ceased to live during all those years, and was just beginning to breathe again. She saw only one thing: Pascal at her feet! She had only one thought in her head: "He will be my husband!"

But Pascal was looking grave.

"Marry! Can we marry?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, in the first place, I am only nineteen. Can a man marry at nineteen?"

"Why not?"

"I don't know. And how old are you?"

"Seventeen."

"Seventeen. And that woman is your guardian?"

"Yes."

"I don't think you can marry without her consent."

"Indeed, she had the right to prevent my entering the convent, and she must have the right to prevent my marriage."

And so Criquette's happiness flew away. She felt that she was still in the hands of Aurélie.

"Do not worry," said Pascal. "There is perhaps some way out of it. When we go to breakfast, we will consult one of my friends, who is a clerk in a lawyer's office, a few steps from here."

The consultation was not a long one. The budding lawyer gave them an audience in the entry-way.

"At what age can a man marry?"

"Seriously?"

"Seriously."

"Before the mayor?"

"Before the mayor."

"Article 141 of the Civil Code: 'A man under eighteen and a woman under fifteen may not marry.'"

Eighteen! Fifteen! There were no obstacles there; but Pascal continued:

"Can a young girl who has neither father nor mother marry without the consent of her guardian?"

"Before twenty-one, no."

A quarter of an hour after, Pascal and Criquette were discussing the situation, seated at a table in a little restaurant of the Rue Saint-Denis.

"Listen," said Pascal; "I am going to take the first train to Beauvais, and once there, I shall threaten Mademoiselle Aurélie with a fine scandal. If she does not give her consent, all

Beauvais shall soon know how she made her money."

"Never, Pascal, never! I forbid you to do that. I don't wish you to go to Beauvais. It would ruin her, and I have no right to do that, even to save myself. She received me and brought me up, and I still owe her gratitude."

"Even after what she has done?"

"Even after what she has done. She foresaw certain sorrows and dangers for me, and she was right, perhaps. That does not change my resolution never to leave you; but I think I ought myself to try if I can influence her."

"How?"

"By writing."

"Writing?"

"Yes."

"And tell her where you are?"

"Oh, that makes no difference, for she knows already. I have found you. She could do the same and so reach me. Let me do it, Pascal. I assure you that it is my duty; but if she does not consent, if she wishes to take me back, you will not abandon me, Pascal; you will help me to defend myself?"

"I swear it."

"And I will defend myself!"

When they had finished breakfast, Criquette wrote, upon the marble top of the table, the following letter to Aurélie:

I have found Pascal again, and we felt at once that we had never ceased to love one another.

He wishes to marry me. He is engaged at the theatre in Mans. Consent to our marriage, I implore you.

She signed it, and said to Pascal:

"Sign it yourself, and put the address of the hotel beneath."

"You have quite decided?"

"Quite. It is my duty."

He signed his name and wrote down the address. They left the restaurant and posted the letter, and then Criquette said to Pascal:

"Now, let us go to see mamma."

An hour after, Criquette was praying at her mother's grave—that grave which had been paid for by Prince Savéline.

It was half-past five, and already growing dark, when they left Père Lachaise.

"Mamma had a friend at Belleville, a charcoal-woman. Do you remember?"

"Yes, very well."

"Let us go and see if she is still there."

The charcoal-woman was still there. She was just sitting down to dinner with her husband and children. The arrival of Criquette was a great event. They would not let the two young people go, and so they dined there off potato soup and a dish of lentils.

But when Criquette rose from the table she suddenly felt completely worn out. What a day it had been! It was not four o'clock in the morning when she had escaped from the little house in Beauvais, and how many emotions she had passed through since then!

Pascal went for a carriage, and when Criquette was seated in it by his side, she said to him:

"My poor boy, how good you are, and how much money I cost you! I am ruining you. And I bring you as a dowry only thirty-six francs in your porte-monnaie. Do you want my thirty-six francs?"

"No," answered Pascal, laughing; "I am rich—very rich. I signed my contract yesterday and received a month's salary in advance."

"How much is that?"

"Four hundred francs. We shall be able to live very well with that."

"With that and with what I make. I am well educated and I have courage. I worked very hard at the convent, and I can give lessons in language and music; but there is something that I would like better—a little corner beside you at the theatre. I am an old actress, you know."

"Yes, yes; and I also have thought of that. We will go to-morrow morning to see Père Lemuche."

"Père Lemuche?"

"He is my manager at Mans. I have had rare good luck to fall into the hands of a very good man. We will go to see him to-morrow."

"Ah! Pascal, if he would take me, for little parts at first, and then better ones, I hope—but at first no matter what—no matter what—provided I am in your theatre—and never leave you—never!"

She was very sleepy; her head sunk upon Pascal's shoulder, and he, putting his arm about her, supported her as he would have supported a sleeping child. But suddenly opening her eyes, she said:

"We forgot, this morning, before going out—"

"Forgot what?"

"To take a room for me at the hotel. Suppose they should not have one."

"Oh, there will be one; have no fear. The hotel is almost empty just now."

She slept again, encircled in Pascal's arms, so quietly and trustingly that no thought of wrong crossed the brain of the young man, who, however, had lived since childhood in a world where morality is at a low ebb and purity rare.

There was a room for Criquette — No. 28. They were to sleep separated by a wall an inch thick.

Pascal looked at this wall and thought:

"Criquette is there, and I have promised to marry her—and I will marry her!"

But his reflections were interrupted by:

"Good-night, Pascal, good-night!"

"Good-night, Criquette, good-night!"

"Good-night, good-night!"

And this was all. Criquette slept under the protection of Pascal, the leading juvenile of the theatre of Mans.

XII.

The night of Criquette's flight Aurélie did not sleep. She was at the end of her strength and patience. When would this struggle be over? Early in the morning she rose and went out into the garden. When she came to the rose-bushes under Criquette's window she noticed that they were crushed and broken. She looked up; the chain of the padlock was gone. She hurried into the house, ran upstairs, and entered the room. Criquette was gone!

To avoid scandal, at all costs, was Aurélie's first thought. She must gain time. No one must suspect her ward's flight. She went down for Criquette's chocolate, and ascended again to her room. At noon for breakfast, and at six o'clock for dinner, she did the same. Madame Guarena and Thérèse must believe that Criquette was still there.

Aurélie found herself in the most terrible of positions, because of her unfortunate past. She tried to believe herself free from it, but it was always rising up before her. All the morning she reflected and waited. She expected at any moment to see Criquette return, docile and repentant after her rebellious escapade. Where could she have gone? To the convent? The superior would not have kept her. To Paris? With-

out money that was impossible. Criquette had no money; Aurélie was very sure of that.

To inform the police and telegraph in all directions would give rise to scandal. If she consulted a lawyer, he would talk; and then, what was the use? Aurélie knew perfectly well the limit of her authority over her ward. The law had not absolutely given the custody of the child to this woman; but still Criquette knew nothing of this. Aurélie had informed her that until she was twenty-one she was under her sole and sovereign control; and Criquette had not doubted her word. It was not so, however; the official guardianship did not give to Aurélie all the rights of a mother over her ward. Under grave circumstances—her lawyer had told her so—she could not act without the authorization of the mayor, who, in legal language, represented the family council of the young girl; but to appeal to the mayor would also give rise to scandal.

During the day Aurélie concluded to make some calls in Beauvais. Everywhere they asked after her ward, and all faces bore the usual impress of provincial stolidity. Evidently no one had seen Criquette, and no one had heard of her. "She will return to-night, when it begins to grow dark," she said to herself, "and ask my pardon." But the evening and the night passed; Aurélie laid awake, listening for the slightest sound, but Criquette did not return.

In the morning, at half-past eight, the postman brought a letter—Criquette's letter, countersigned

by Pascal. Aurélie's first feeling was one of anger—of fury even. She thought of taking the first train, appealing to the commissary of police, and bringing Criquette back by force. Yes; but would the commissary of police consent? She was not the girl's mother. And then Criquette would resist; Pascal would defend her, call the people of the hotel, the passers in the streets, and would not allow the lovely creature who had been cast into his arms to be carried off without a struggle. The Paris newspapers would bring to Beauvais a report of the affair, names and all.

Aurélie would have been willing enough to consent to the marriage, if by that means she could have got rid of Criquette. She knew what she could say to explain her ward's disappearance. Yes; but the publication of the bans would have to be made at Beauvais, the last residence of the young girl; and on the bulletin-board of the mayor's office would appear: "There is a promise of marriage between Céline Brinquart and Pascal, dramatic artist." This again would cause scandal.

After lengthy deliberation, Aurélie at last took a sheet of paper and wrote a letter, consisting of a few lines. She placed this letter in two envelopes, the first bearing the name of her ward, and the second that of Pascal. The clerks in the Beauvais post-office must not know that the girl was in Paris. Aurélie went out and posted the letter herself.

Just as the postman was ringing the bell of the little house in the Rue du Bout-du-Mur, Criquette awoke and rapped on the wall of her chamber, calling out:

"Good-morning, Pascal."

"Good-morning, Criquette."

"At what time shall we go to see the manager?"

"At once. Père Lemuche is an early bird."

But, before starting out, they consulted a railway guide. Criquette knew that the postman never rung at the door of the little house in Beauvais before half-past eight. Aurélie, to come to Paris—and she would come, without any doubt—could take no train before ten o'clock, and she would not arrive in the Rue de Clèry until half-past twelve. They both wished to be there to receive her.

Père Lemuche was the oldest patron of the Hotel of Dunkirk and Lisbon, in the Rue de Bouloi. This hotel, since 1837, had changed its manager six times, and each of the six managers had piously left to his successor Père Lemuche as a legacy. Each of them learned from his predecessor that when Monsieur Lemuche announced his near arrival in Paris, Room 17, on the first floor, at the end of the court, must be reserved for him; and in this room must be hung four pictures which were the private property of the guest.

Three of these pictures were portraits of dramatic authors not altogether unknown to fame:

Molière, Corneille, Racine. For thirty years César Lemuche had been a manager of provincial theatres, and when he came to Paris every year to engage his company, he did not wish to be alone in his room at the hotel. He liked to find every evening on his return familiar faces smiling down upon him. And such were the comrades he gave himself. He might have made a worse selection.

The fourth frame contained a marvel of calligraphy, the masterpiece of a professor of writing of the time of the Restoration. High up on the right was the tragic mask of Melpomene, and on the left the smiling mask of Thalia, both wonders of intricate lines. Below the two masks, combining ingeniously all fashions of calligraphy, was consigned to posterity the following statement:

CÉSAR LEMUCHE.
His Creations at the Théâtre Français.
1823–1824.

1. JEAN OF BURGUNDY.,
Tragedy in five acts, by Guilleau de Formont.
December 4, 1823.
Played by Talma, Lafon, Desmousseaux, Dumilâtre, Damas, Ligier, Lemuche, and Mlle. Duchesnois.

2. A ROGUE IN SPITE OF HIMSELF.
Comedy in three acts, by Dumersan.
May 29, 1824.
Played by Firmin, Devigny, Michelot, Desmousseaux, Armand Dailly, Lemuche, and Mlle. Mars.

3. EUDORA AND CYMODOCEUS.
Tragedy in five acts, by Gray.
July 17, 1824.
Played by Sainte-Aulaire, Lafon, Desmousseaux, Firmin, Dumilâtre, Menjaud, Michelot, Lemuche, Mlle. Brochard, and Mme. Tousey.

All this, moreover, was most scrupulously true. Yes, César Lemuche, from the month of October, 1823, to the month of October, 1824, was a member of the company of the Théâtre Français. He had been one of the comedians in ordinary of His Majesty Louis XVIII., and of His Majesty Charles X., as he had the good fortune to play in two reigns; and the old manager of the theatre of Mans could, without lying, and even appropriately, utter the following sentences:

"When I belonged to the Comédie Française—"

"When I played there both tragedy and comedy—"

"When I acted my scene with Talma—"

"When I shared in the success of Mademoiselle Mars—"

"When I created three rôles at the Théâtre Français—"

As to the importance and extent of these three rôles Lemuche gave no detail; but it occurred to an old habitué of the Poitiers theatre to send to Paris for copies of "Jean of Burgundy," "A Rogue in Spite of Himself," and "Eudora and Cymodoceus. Then, under the heading "The Truth in Regard to the Three Creations of Monsieur Lemuche," he published in the Vienna *Journal* an article which contained the following revelations:

In "John of Burgundy," Lemuche played an officer of the palace. He made a rapid entrance in Scene VI., Act 2, and said to the dauphin:

"Prince, an immense crowd is at this moment invading the palace. All our efforts are vain."

This was all there was of the part.

In "Eudora and Cymodoceus," Lemuche played a Roman; he advanced down the stage, pointed to the amphitheatre of Nero, and said to the people:

"Behold the circus open for the sanguinary games. The tigers, the lions, and the victims, all are ready."

More modest still was Lemuche's creation in the comedy répertoire. He played a lackey in "A Rogue in Spite of Himself." The door opened at the end of the first act. The principal characters were grouped upon the stage. Lemuche said to them:

"Gentlemen, dinner is served!"

Nothing more; and yet Lemuche spoke with pride of this creation.

"I played only a secondary rôle," he said; "a domestic—a simple domestic, but I placed my own individual stamp upon that domestic; in fact, I made of him a Lemuche!"

The city of Mans had the honor of being the birthplace of César Lemuche, in the month of September, 1802; but it was not until much later, after many adventures and journeys, that the ex-actor of the Comédie-Française returned there permanently. His father was an usher to the civil tribunal of Mans; he had hoped that César would one day succeed him, wear like him the black robe, and like him announce in a loud, clear

voice the parties summoned to the bar of the tribunal.

"Yes," said César Lemuche, when he related his life, and he related it often, as he considered it the most interesting thing in the world to talk about; "yes, my father destined me for Themis, but the gods decided otherwise. Melpomene and Thalia were the stronger."

Lemuche was a pure classicist; he would never have mentioned Thalia before Melpomene, he respected too much the order of precedence. In 1820, César Lemuche, fascinated by the stage, joined a company of traveling actors who happened to pass through Mans. In 1823 he had the good fortune to enter the Comédie-Française at the modest salary of eight hundred francs a year. He filled there, moreover, the same functions that his father did at the tribunal of Mans. The one opened the door of the court-room and exclaimed: "Gentlemen, the tribunal!" The other opened the door of the dining-room and exclaimed: "Gentlemen, you are served!" The father announced the court and the son the dinner.

They praised at the theatre César Lemuche's zeal and punctuality, but he was dismissed at the end of twelve months, for a very odd reason—he was too thin. To give him all the valets, lackeys, and domestics of the old and new répertoire, the old and legendary liveries of the Théâtre Français would have to be made over. An actor presented himself who had the necessary amount of flesh, and so poor Lemuche remained only a short time

the comrade of Talma and Mademoiselle Mars. It was sufficient, however, to make the glory of his whole existence.

Lemuche put on the harness again, and for fifteen years played comedy in the provinces. He was neither good nor bad; in some towns he succeeded, in others he fell flat; he had partisans at Montpellier and detractors at Nîmes. He had a secret ambition to become the manager of a theatre, to direct a company, and train actors. This ambition he was able to realize, on the death of his father, who left to each of his children—César had a sister—the sum of twenty thousand francs. Six months after, Lemuche obtained the lease of the theatre at Amiens. He was a very ordinary actor, but he was an excellent manager. He was in love with his profession, which is in all things the first element of success. He lived only in his theatre and for his theatre. He had his ups and downs, his good years and his bad years; but on the whole he succeeded. After twenty years of theatrical management in all parts of France, he had laid aside twenty thousand francs. He could then obtain the lease of the theatre at Mans. This was a quiet enterprise, a half-retreat; not much money to make in good years, but not much to lose in bad years. He lived thus very happily for six years, greatly beloved in the city. He intended to run the theatre for two or three seasons more and then retire, and end his life in his little house in the Avenue de Paris.

It was usually during Easter week, after the closing of the theatre, that Lemuche came to Paris every year to spend a month and select the members of his company; but this year they were making great changes in the theatre, and the reopening was to take place the first of November, and for that reason Lemuché did not arrive in Paris until the middle of September. He had, moreover, renewed the contracts of most of his company of the previous season. He had only four more people to engage—an old man, a juvenile, a comic old woman, and an *ingénue*. He had found his juvenile—Pascal—his comic old woman, and his old man. He was hesitating between two *ingénues*.

At the moment that Pascal and Criquette were ascending the stairs of the hotel, Père Lemuche, wrapped in a big dressing-gown, was promenading up and down, and wondering which of the two *ingénues* he should take. He walked with a quick, alert step. He was a little old man, who talked nervously, with many gestures; he always wore a white cravat and a crisply curling wig of the most intense black. Père Lemuche was interrupted in his promenade and his reflections by a discreet little tap at his chamber door.

"Come in!" he cried. "Come in!"

The door opened, and Pascal appeared.

"Ah! is it you, my boy? You have come to see your old manager?"

"Yes, Monsieur Lemuche; but I am not alone. Did you not say to me yesterday that you had not yet found an *ingénue*?"

"An *ingénue*? Yes, I am still looking for one."

"Well, I have found you someone who I think will suit you."

"Where is she?"

"Outside in the entry."

"Bring her in."

"Come in, Criquette."

And Criquette appeared on the threshold, blushing a little.

"Where did you find her?" asked Lemuche, brusquely.

"Where did I find her? Why, she is an old friend of mine."

"An old friend? I congratulate you on your old friends. What a face for the stage! How pretty she is—how pretty! Come in, my child—come in and let me look at you a little. You are good to look at. Humph! if your song is equal to your plumage, and if your ideas are not too high, César Lemuche will engage you."

"Oh, my ideas are not very high, Monsieur. If I can only stay with Pascal and never leave him!"

With one of the most charming and natural of movements, she approached Pascal and took his hand.

"How she said that!" cried Père Lemuche. "A perfect *ingénue*. And you have already acted?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied Pascal. "She has already—"

"Let her speak, my boy. I want to hear her,

not you. I know all about you. Well, my dear," addressing Criquette. "Pardon me, I always call the ladies of my company my dear. It is more convenient at rehearsals; so, if I engage you, I shall call you my dear."

"Oh! begin immediately, if you like," answered Criquette, laughing.

"I ask nothing better, especially as I think you will probably make acquaintance with Mans."

"I want to do so with all my heart."

"So you have already acted?"

"Yes, Monsieur, but a long time ago."

"Oh! a long time ago?"

"Yes; a very long time ago. I was quite a little girl, only eleven."

"And where did you play?"

"At the Porte-Saint-Martin."

"In what piece?"

"A fairy-piece."

"That is bad to commence with. Spectacles and burlesques are the ruin of the drama. What was the name of this fairy-piece?"

"'Gri-Gri.'"

"'Gri-Gri!' I saw that. One has to see everything; and I remember — What was the queer little name they called you then?"

"Criquette."

"Criquette! Little Criquette! Why, people talked about you then. You played the part of a little princess who kicked up her skirts."

"Yes, Monsieur."

"You made a success—a great success. And

after that, what became of you? Were you at the Conservatory with Pascal?"

"Oh! no, Monsieur. I passed six years in the convent."

"In the convent. And after leaving the convent you commenced to run about with this big fellow here. There is some romance under this."

"There is a little."

"Well, that is your business, not mine. What interests me is my *ingénue*. You have the appearance for the parts; but fine eyes and a pretty face are not everything. You must recite something for me. Do you know anything?"

"No; nothing."

"But at the convent—Racine wrote tragedies for convents."

"Ah! I know by heart the first three acts of 'Athalie.' "

"Racine! 'Athalie!' I have played in 'Athalié' at the Comédie-Française."

Played! *Figured* would have been more exact, for Lemuche was charged with the absolutely mute rôle of one of the Levites who rush upon the stage, in the fifth act, when *Joas* cries:

"Soldiers of the living God, defend your king!"

"Yes," he continued; "I played in 'Athalie.' And Racine is one of my gods. I have a little old edition there. Molière, Corneille, Racine! Their portraits! Their works! I could not live without them. There, my boy, take the volume and give her the cues. In the second act, the examination of *Joas*. You take the part of *Athalie*, and let her speak the lines of *Joas*."

He rolled his arm-chair near the window, sat down with his back to the light, and told the young people to take up their station before him. They commenced:

Pascal.—"What is your name?"

Criquette.—"My name is Eliacin."

Pascal.—"And your father?"

Criquette.—"I am, they say, an orphan. In the arms of God," etc.

Lemuche was happy. A recital, a recital in verse—a classical recital! And an excellent one, too! Criquette's voice was a little thin in compass, but of charming quality. She pronounced correctly—a little too correctly for Lemuche's taste.

"You are very intelligent; but you do not separate the verses and mark the rhythm sufficiently. I am of the old school—the school of fine declamation. It is great music—great poetry. Verses should not be spoken, but sung; but it was not bad—not bad at all."

"And you engage me?"

"Oh, not yet—not yet! We do not play 'Athalie' at Mans."

He commenced to rummage amidst a pile of paper-covered plays which lay upon his bureau.

"This will do," he said; "'The Olden Times.' Two young people who adore each other, and an old man who is interested in their love affair. Quite appropriate, is it not?"

"A little," answered Criquette.

"A little! Entirely so." Then, addressing

Pascal, he asked: "Do you know the part of *Octave?*"

"I played it last summer at Vichy."

"Good. Let her study *Jacqueline*, and return to-morrow at four o'clock. You make a very nice couple, and I should like very much to take you to Mans. I have had many *ingénues* in my companies during the last thirty years, but none so sweet and pretty as you, my dear. By the way, I told you that I always called my actresses 'my dear;' and that is not all, when they are pretty girls I kiss them."

Criquette came to him with a smile, and he placed two great kisses upon her cheeks—classic salutes, real stage kisses.

It is very rare that presentiments prove correct; but Criquette left the room feeling that she had found a friend, and she was not mistaken.

On the way back to their own hotel, Pascal told her the plot of the piece. This meant a conversation on love, for the pretty comedy is a touching little poem of tenderness and affection They breakfasted alone in the hotel dining-room. Criquette stood up before her, against a *carafe*, the book of the play. To learn a part, a real part, with Pascal for a teacher! In her delight, she thought no more of Aurélie; but suddenly she came upon the following passage. The old man asks *Jacqueline* to tell him her history, and she answers: "It is not long. My mother died when I was twelve years old. My father married again, a wicked woman who beat me all the

blessed day. Then I ran away from the house, and I live as I can, working hard, and neither thinking nor doing anything wrong. That is my history."

It was Criquette's history also, or almost so. She looked at her hands, which still bore the marks of Aurélie's clutch. All her delight vanished. It was noon. Aurélie might be expected now at any moment.

"You will never abandon me, Pascal. You have promised."

"And I promise again."

"I was wrong to write to her. Suppose we run away and go far off—to America."

"And my engagement? I have no right to go away."

"True!"

"And then, how about money? We must have money to go far."

"True! True!"

They went up to Pascal's room, which was larger than Criquette's, and more convenient for rehearsing. Criquette was anxious to know the whole rôle by the next day, from the first line to the last. Her work occupied her and drove away the depression that was beginning to weigh upon her mind.

She repeated her lines, clutching Pascal and throwing herself into his arms whenever she heard a carriage in the street or a step upon the stairs, afraid each time that it was the dreaded Aurélie.

So passed the entire day. Why did Aurélie not come? Perhaps she had appealed to the magistrates or the police. She would not come herself, and Criquette would lose the hope of softening her by her entreaties, or frightening her by her resistance. Men would come—men who in the name of the law would seize her and take her back to Beauvais, despite her tears and cries.

"If that does happen," she said to Pascal, "you must follow me—you must follow me!"

She crept close to him, feeling that he was her refuge, her love, her life. The same fear possessed them both; they were one in their anxiety and affection.

The day drew to a close. They did not dare to go down to dinner in the common dining-room. The approach of night added to their nervousness; something vague weighed upon them, something worse than their worst imaginings. They ordered their dinner to be served in Pascal's room; but they scarcely touched what was brought them, and leaving the table they sat down on the little sofa.

"I am afraid," said Criquette. "Let us do something. Let us try to rehearse."

She had a wonderful memory, and, despite her worry, she had succeeded in learning nearly all the rôle of *Jacqueline*. The sentences mechanically left her lips—sentences of love—and Pascal, mechanically also, recited the words of his rôle. Now and then he kissed Criquette's hair. She looked up at him with a smile. Soon they spoke

no more. Half-asleep, they rested in one another's arms.

A knock at the door suddenly roused them from sentiment to reality. It was one of the servants of the hotel with a letter for Pascal. Criquette eagerly examined the address, and when the servant had departed, she exclaimed:

"It is from her! I know the writing. Open it! Open it quickly!"

He broke the seal, but in the first envelope was a second upon which were written these two words: "For her." Within was the following letter:

I can not consent to such a marriage; nor will I ever consent to it. If you will return *alone*, tractable and obedient, I can still pardon you. No one here suspects your departure. If you do not wish to return, I ask only one thing, which I have the right to ask of you: Never appear again in Beauvais I shall say that you have gone to enter a convent in Paris. Understand what I say: Return at once or not at all.

AURÉLIE.

Criquette read and re-read the letter very carefully, and then she handed it to Pascal. In a few minutes, he returned it to her without a word.

The evening was mild and warm. She went to the open window, and he joined her there. She leaned her head on his shoulder, still without a word. They remained thus a long time—a very long time. She was reflecting, and he did not disturb her.

Then, suddenly, Criquette said to Pascal: "Take me! Keep me! I am your wife!"

XIII.

The next day at three o'clock Aurélie received the following communication:

"You will never hear of me again."

Aurélie put on her hat and cloak, and went to pay a visit to Madame Meunier. She explained to her that her ward, unable to resist the dictates of her conscience, had departed to commence her novitiate in a Parisian convent.

"Your son must not be angry with her," she said, in conclusion. "She has preferred no one to him but God."

Young Stanislas was resigned. He espoused the least ugly of the three marriageable girls in Beauvais.

As for Aurélie, she continued to live at Beauvais in the peace of a provincial life, respected by all.

At the very moment that Criquette's guardian was addressing to Madame Meunier a carefully prepared discourse on her ward's irresistible predilection for a religious life, that ward was indeed contracting an engagement, but it was not with God nor for eternity; it was with César Lemuche, manager of the theatre of Mans; and it was only for seven months, from October 1, 1866, to May 1, 1867. She promised to devote to him her talents, exclusively and without any reserve, in the acting of *ingénue* parts.

Criquette had done herself credit at her second recital, and had acted with much grace and sweetness the pretty part of *Jacqueline.*

"You are charming," Lemuche said to her. "Of course, you must work and learn your profession; but I will attend to that. I will be your teacher. And now, my children, if you like, leave for Mans to-morrow. I advise you to live at The Conqueror, a good old house, half-hotel, half-inn, at the gates of Mans, almost in the country. You will spend less money there than in Paris. We shall not begin to rehearse for ten days, but you will have plenty to do. Pascal has a dozen parts to commit to memory, and you, my dear, will have as many. My business will detain me in Paris until the end of the week, but I invite you to dine with me a week from to-morrow at my little house in Mans. You will make the acquaintance of Mademoiselle Clémentine, my sister, and if you do not at once win her friendship, as you did mine, I shall be very much astonished, Criquette. Yes, Criquette —for I too am going to call you Criquette."

They left Paris the next day, and Criquette finally discovered what happiness was. The first two weeks of October were delightful—those early days in autumn which have all the softness of spring. And it was spring also in the hearts of the youth and maiden, whose friendship had become love. They commenced again their walks and wanderings of the old days, but this time through the real country. Early in the morning,

they set out, carrying a copy of a sombre drama or a lively farce, "The Willow Copse" or "What is Love?" As a rule, they went to Yvré-l'Evêque. This was a walk of about three miles, along a beautiful road bordered with tall poplars. They breakfasted in a little restaurant near the bridge that crosses the Huisne, beyond the village; then they passed the day in the open air, under the shade of four great chestnuts, on the side of the Auvours hills. There, lying on the grass, or seated upon the trunk of an old tree, they gravely exchanged tirades of melodrama or merry speeches of farces. They had an audience—an old shepherd who pastured his sheep on the hill-side. He came and sat down beside them, in his goat-skin dress, his crook between his legs, and laughed confidently when he saw them laugh, without understanding a single word of what they said. The shepherd's dog also sometimes joined the party, barking with all his might when foolish laughter seized at once the two young people and the old shepherd.

Criquette and Pascal dined, as had been arranged, with Père Lemuche, and were presented to Mademoiselle Clémentine, an odd-looking little woman, very short, very plump, and very much surprised to finish among actors and actresses an existence which had been passed almost entirely amidst the most aristocratic surroundings.

In 1832 she was a school-mistress at Sargé, a large village a few miles from Mans, when a lady of the neighborhood, the Marquise de Louvercy,

engaged her as governess to her little granddaughter. Mademoiselle Lemuche entered the Château de Louvercy, and remained there thirty years. After the education of her young pupil was finished, she was raised to the rank of reader and companion to the Marquise. From 1842 to 1862, all the romances of the eighteenth century, and the nineteenth as well, rolled in torrents from the lips of Mademoiselle Lemuche. She never left the Marquise, but went to Paris with her in winter, and thus moved in the highest possible society. So that if César Lemuche could say to his sister, "Talma explained to me one day," etc., or, "I remarked one evening to Mademoiselle Mars," etc., Clémentine Lemuche could reply to her brother, "One night when I was at the Duchesse d'Estignac's," etc., or, "I heard the Prince de Valgeneuse relate," etc.

While she was reader and companion, Mademoiselle Lemuche also taught, from 1848 to 1852, young Etienne de Sérignan, the son of her former pupil, how to read, write, and cipher. The Marquise died in 1862, leaving her reader an annuity of twelve hundred francs, and the old maid, suddenly fallen from her grandeur, came to ask the hospitality of her brother, who received her with open arms. Mademoiselle Lemuche's advent, however, was preceded by a very decided declaration; she would have nothing whatever to do with the business and people of the theatre; having lived as she had, she could not associate with actors, whom she looked upon as vagabonds; she admitted only one exception—her brother.

A month rolled by, during which Clémentine Lemuche affected to ignore completely the profession followed by César Lemuche.

But, during breakfast one morning, early in the second month, she said to her brother:

"Well, how goes your frightful theatre?"

"Pretty well."

"And your frightful actors?"

"Pretty well, also."

"I saw yesterday in the Place du Marché your advertisement."

"My frightful advertisement."

"You are playing 'The Pearl of Savoy.' A drama, is it not? I read it once to the Marquise."

"Yes, it is a drama."

"Did you have a good house last evening?"

"Yes, very good."

"What were the receipts?"

"Over six hundred francs."

"And is that good?"

"Yes, when the expenses are only three hundred and fifty."

Mademoiselle Lemuche did not ask any further questions then, but a few days after she said to César:

"I was all alone last evening. You had left upon my desk a memorandum from your costumer, and I cast my eyes over it mechanically, without exactly thinking what I was doing—"

"It was my costumer's accounts."

"Precisely. Well, there were two or three

errors in them, and not to your advantage. I have rectified them."

The next day, Mademoiselle Lemuche took into her own hands the supervision of the costume department; then, the next week, that of the accounts and the box-office. She was soon seen at all hours everywhere in the theatre, directing the workmen, watching the doorkeeper, making up the accounts, and carrying home, every evening after the play, the receipts in a little velvet bag which had been given her by Madame de Louvercy.

The day that Pascal and Criquette sat down for the first time at their manager's table, there were present two other guests, Monsieur and Madame Lacalpranède, who were respectively the heavy man and the second old woman of the company.

Lacalpranède was playing the leading parts at Montpellier when the childless widow of a druggist, with an income of four or five thousand livres a year, fell madly in love with him. Lacalpranède resigned himself to marry, but only after the following declaration:

"You say that you can not live without me, and I have no wish to cause your death. I offer you my hand; but we must have a perfect understanding. An artist has no right to selfishly devote himself to one woman. He must quaff without cessation the living sources of passion, pass through violent and varied sensations, study constantly in himself the various phases of love, in order that he may present them vividly

upon the stage; so I shall, in all probability, love other women besides you; and more than that, as I am of a frank, expansive nature, I shall speak to you of my love affairs and tell you how they progress. If this arrangement suits you, be Madame Lacalpranède. If not, farewell forever."

She accepted, promising never to worry him with reproaches or jealousy. To promise was nothing—one promises everything when one is in love—but, strange to say, Clarisse kept her word. Her name was Clarisse. Lacalpranède, in her eyes, was not a man, he was a god; so that, though often tortured, she ended by becoming interested in his love affairs and proud of his successes. Clarisse passed her life in making frills and ruffles for Lacalpranède—who still wore frills and ruffles—and after a few years, in order to be always with her adored husband, she engaged in his company as second old woman, making forty francs a month singing in choruses, forming one of a mob, and devouring with her eyes her husband when she happened to be on the stage behind her idol.

One evening at Nancy, an incident happened which threw the audience into a veritable frenzy. Clarisse was playing the part of a chamber-maid. At the end of the fourth act she brought a letter to Lacalpranède, who was alone on the stage. She said to him: "There is an answer," and retired to the back to wait, like a servant who knows her place. This letter was an important point in the drama; it brought to Lacalpranède

shocking revelations. It informed him that his wife had deceived him for twenty years, with his best friend. Lacalpranède read this letter in a hollow, suppressed voice; as he finished, he was about to burst into tears, but he restrained himself by a powerful effort, on account of the presence of the maid. This was the great scene of the part.

After the reading of the letter, Clarisse should have approached and said to Lacalpranède: "Is there any answer, Monsieur?" and Lacalpranède, now master of himself, should have replied: "No answer." But the unfortunate Clarisse was so overcome by the reading of the letter, her husband appeared to her so touching, so noble, and so handsome, that she approached him slowly—slowly, and cast herself into his arms, when he had ceased speaking, crying: "Ah! my Hippolyte, what genius you have! what genius!"

This gave rise to a frightful rumpus in the auditorium, and they were obliged to lower the curtain. Some of the audience roared with laughter, but the majority were exasperated and cried furiously:

"Apologize! Apologize!"

Poor Madame Lacalpranède was forced to come before the curtain and very humbly present her excuses to the public. She did so in the following words:

"I beg your pardon, ladies and gentlemen, but I could not help it. You see, he is my husband, and I love him so much!"

She was overwhelmed with applause, and never had so much success upon the stage, before or since.

César and Clémentine Lemuche, Hippolyte and Clarisse Lacalpranède, were destined to be, for the next three years, the best friends of Criquette, who, at seventeen, had already lived with charcoal-sellers, burlesque actresses, princes, kings, nuns, and respectable members of provincial society. Frank and kind, tender and merry, she in herself was the grace and youth of that little troup of comedians, who said to her:

"You are too pretty for the provinces. You will leave us soon and go to Paris."

But Criquette answered them:

"I will go where Pascal goes."

They both made their début the same evening, in the same piece, and they both succeeded; but Pascal's success was more marked than that of Criquette. After the last act, Lemuche took her aside, and said to her:

"You have had some success, but he has played better than you; and yet you ought to play better than he, for you are more intelligent."

"Oh, no, Monsieur Lemuche."

"Oh, yes, Mademoiselle Criquette. You were not actress enough. You were too natural—too simple. They like that in Paris, but in the provinces—no. And then, every time that you are on the stage with Pascal, you are too much engaged with him. You seem to love him better than your part."

"But I do."

"Love him at home, but not on the stage. Now he thought only of his part, and he was right. Each for himself at the theatre, and the public for all."

The first year was one long dream of delight for Criquette, and her life may be related in one line: "He loved her, and she was happy."

At the theatre, everything amused Criquette, but especially the stories and reminiscences of Lacalpranède. During the intermissions, in the little green-room, the actors would whisper among themselves:

"We must make Criquette laugh. Let us ask Lacalpranède to tell us a story."

"Which one?"

"Oh, Frédérick Lemaitre at Montpellier."

Then, one of the actors, addressing Lacalpranède, would say:

"It was at Montpellier, I think, that you met Frédérick Lemaitre."

"Yes, at Montpellier. Poor Frédérick! Since the beginning of the season I had played nine times in 'Thirty Years; or, The Life of a Gambler.' I had made Frédérick's part, the part of the gambler, my own; as, indeed, I made all my parts my own. A drama represented nine times at Montpellier in the same season! The fact was without precedent! The evening of the ninth performance, the Mayor himself came to the theatre to congratulate me in person. Now, one day, Frédérick arrived at Montpellier, with the intention of

giving a few performances. He was traveling with a post-chaise and horses. The manager of the theatre received him on his arrival. Frédérick's first words, as he descended from his carriage, were: 'Is not Monsieur Lacalpranède within your walls?' 'Yes, Monsieur Frédérick.' 'And he has played "Thirty Years" here?' 'Yes, Monsieur Frédérick.' 'Very well, then; I shall not stop here. I go straight on to Marseilles.' They changed horses, and he drove away in ten minutes. He did not care to attempt to rival me, and he was right. I do not know if at Paris he had the women with him, but he would not have had them at Montpellier; and when you have not the women on your side, you have nothing. Now, I held them all at Montpellier. You can testify to that, Madame Lacalpranède."

"Yes, my friend."

"No man can boast of having had so many admirers as I."

"Beginning with me," said Clarisse.

"Yes; but hundreds of others, also. Women, follies, pleasures—I have exhausted them all!"

He accompanied these words with an immense sweeping gesture that seemed to embrace all enjoyment of every kind, without letting one escape.

Madame Lacalpranède looked at him in ecstasy, her eyes round with adoration. Poor woman! How touching she was in her devotion and admiration! She was proud and happy to have borne and pardoned all, for after each escapade he had

always returned to her. And to-day, her god—old, wrinkled, and gray, condemned to play the heavy parts—was her god still, and to her alone he seemed ever handsome—ever young.

How Criquette laughed at that speech of Lacalpranède: "Women, follies, pleasures—I have exhausted them all!"

"You laugh, Mademoiselle Criquette," he said to her; "you laugh, young dove, at the lion grown old. Ah! if I were only twenty years younger, it would not be that tall fellow there that you would love, but I, Lacalpranède."

"I don't say no, Monsieur Lacalpranède."

But just now it was that tall fellow there that she loved, and that tall fellow alone. She did not, however, lack admirers. Pretty girls are rare in provincial theatres; and the rumor soon spread that César Lemuche had in his company a little marvel of grace and beauty. A number of the young dandies, who usually disdained the Mans theatre, came to admire and applaud Criquette. The servants of The Conqueror received for her many notes, and bouquets of roses and white lilacs. It was all pure waste of time. The young men of Mans, as they loitered about the stage-door after the performance, saw Criquette come out on the arm of Pascal, and, pressed close to him, walk slowly away under the big trees of the Promenade des Jacobins; they were lovers in private life as well as on the stage.

Criquette was entirely wrapped up in Pascal—a little too much so, in the opinion of Père Lem-

uche, who now and then preached her a little sermon.

"Take care, my child," he would say to her, "take care! You have only love, and you ought to have ambition also. Pascal has it. He loves you, but he loves the stage as well."

XIV.

When Pascal rehearsed in the day-time, and Criquette had no part in the play, she generally went to pass the afternoon with Mademoiselle Lemuche, who, charmed to find so much grace and distinction in an employé of her brother, conceived for the young actress a very sincere and tender affection.

Now, one day at one o'clock, about the middle of April, 1868, Criquette arrived at the little house in the Avenue de Paris.

"Mademoiselle Clémentine was obliged to go out for a short time," the maid said to her; "but she told me, if you came, not to let you go and to ask you to wait for her."

Criquette had brought her work. She took off her hat and sat down in the *salon*, with her embroidery, near an open window. Suddenly she heard the sound of a horse's hoofs, and raising her eyes she perceived a young man, who, with the reins in his left hand and his hat in his right, had stopped his horse exactly before the window, and was looking at Criquette with a surprise evidently mingled with pleasure.

"Pardon me, Mademoiselle," he said; "does not Monsieur Lemuche live here now?"

"Yes, Monsieur, certainly."

"Then pardon me; I came to see Mademoiselle Clémentine."

"She has gone out, Monsieur, but will be back very shortly. Wait for her, I beg. She would be so sorry to miss your visit."

"You know me, then, Mademoiselle?"

"I do not know you, but I recognize who you are."

"I am curious to know how."

"Oh, I will tell you. It is the simplest of mysteries; but dismount and I will open the door for you."

He dismounted and passed his horse's bridle through a ring fixed in the wall. Criquette was on the threshold to meet him, and when they had entered the *salon*, pointing to a photograph hung over the piano, she said to him:

"There, Monsieur; that is why I recognized you. I know that you are Count Etienne de Sérignan, and I know that Mademoiselle Clémentine will be very glad to see you again."

"Is that all you know of me, Mademoiselle?" he said, laughingly.

"Oh, no!" she answered in the same tone, quite won by his charming manners; "I know more—much more."

"What? Tell me, please."

"I know that you have just returned from a trip around the world; I know that four or five months ago you were walking upon the great wall of China; that six weeks later you were galloping upon a big black pony in the streets of a

Japanese city; that you then went for a little visit to San Francisco, and that you embarked the first of this month at New York upon the *Péreire.* Is not all this true?"

"Perfectly. You are a sorceress."

"A very poor sorceress, I assure you. Mademoiselle Clémentine speaks of you constantly, and she has read me three or four letters that you had the kindness to write her during the last year. You gave her great pleasure by writing to her, for she loves you with all her heart."

"And I thoroughly return the affection she has for me. It was she who brought me up."

"At the Château de Louvercy, a few miles from here. I have been there more than once to walk in the woods with Mademoiselle Clémentine."

"In short, all that one can know of me you know, while I know nothing of you."

"Oh, since Mademoiselle Clémentine is not here to introduce me, I will introduce myself, gladly. Under what name, however? I have several. I will tell you my stage name, I think."

"Your stage name!"

"Mademoiselle Gilberte. I belong to Monsieur Lemuche's company."

"You belong—"

"Why, yes. I play comedy—the *ingénues.*"

Before Monsieur de Sérignan could reply, the door of the *salon* was hastily thrown open and Mademoiselle Lemuche appeared. The good lady was all out of breath, for she had run all the way

down the street, as she perceived the horse fastened in front of the door. She threw her arms about the young man, and kissed him three or four times.

"Monsieur Etienne, is it you? How happy I am! Come to the window, that I may get a good look at you. How brown you are! And how big your mustache is!" Then, turning to Criquette, she continued: "This is Monsieur de Sérignan, of whom I have spoken to you so often. I must present you."

"I have already presented myself, Mademoiselle."

"And have you told him that you are the sweetest and best little woman there is in the world?"

"No; I did not say that."

"But I perceived it," said Monsieur de Sérignan.

Criquette wished to withdraw, but she yielded to the protests of Mademoiselle Lemuche and the young count. She therefore remained, and it is very certain that if she had gone Monsieur de Sérignan's visit would have been much shorter. The conversation was scarcely more than a monologue descriptive of travel; the young man enjoyed relating his experiences, and showing delicately that he was not commonplace. He had much wit and that delightful vivacity only to be found in youth. While speaking, he addressed himself a little to Mademoiselle Lemuche, but much to Criquette, attracted by those great,

speaking black eyes which, unconsciously, with a sort of hardy frankness, sought and demanded sympathy.

He spoke, and Criquette listened to his discourse with the closest attention. For the first time in her life she found herself in the presence of a really cultivated, amiable, and distinguished gentleman. There was in him a superiority of thought and language which charmed her and troubled her at the same time. Very often at the theatre she was wounded by the vulgarity or brutality of her comrades' remarks. She struggled against this feeling, for they were, in the main, kind-hearted people, and it was among them that her life was to be passed; but here there opened to her a new world; there were other ways of living, feeling, and speaking. Her keen intelligence and the excellent education she had received permitted her to appreciate the grace and refinement of this young man's speech—at once serious and light, solid and brilliant.

And he talked on and on, inspired by the girl's attention, until four o'clock sounded. Then Criquette arose abruptly, as if awakened suddenly from a dream. She had told Pascal that she would meet him at the theatre at three o'clock, and for the first time in her life she had forgotten him.

"Four o'clock!" she exclaimed. "It is impossible! Pardon me, Monsieur, for interrupting you, but I must go at once."

"We shall meet again, I hope."

"I hope so, sincerely. I have listened to you with so much interest and pleasure."

"*Au revoir*, then, Mademoiselle."

"*Au revoir*, Monsieur."

With a natural, thoughtless impulse, she gave him her hand, as to an old friend, and after kissing Mademoiselle Clémentine, she departed.

Criquette played that evening, and Monsieur de Sérignan was the first person she saw as she came upon the stage. He was alone in a proscenium-box. It was a Tuesday—the company played only three times a week, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays. The following Thursday and Sunday Criquette played again, and both nights Monsieur de Sérignan was there in the same box. Criquette glanced toward it, and the lorgnette which was fixed upon her was immediately lowered.

Two or three days during that week she had no rehearsal; but she did not go to see Mademoiselle Lemuche. On Sunday evening the latter came to the theatre and reproached her for her neglect.

"You do not rehearse to-morrow," she said. Come. I shall expect you."

Criquette did not know how to refuse. She arrived about two o'clock, fearing and yet longing to see Monsieur de Sérignan again. He was not there, but she had not been seated long with her embroidery when she heard the sound of a horse's hoofs. It was he.

She had played three different parts during the week; he complimented her, but without stupid-

ity or exaggeration, and with a little smiling criticism. Fulsome praise would have disgusted her; but she was very grateful for this calm, discreet eulogy. The young man seemed to be frankness itself, and it was impossible that he would say anything except what he thought; but his looks spoke even more than his words; he could not remove his eyes from Criquette's face. He was manifestly anxious to please her, while she, uneasy and happy at the same time, abandoned herself to the charm of a personality hitherto unknown to her. At their first interview she had spoken but little, but this afternoon she talked more, and all that she said was easy, natural, and charming.

Nevertheless, she watched the clock, and did not forget that Pascal, at three o'clock, would be waiting for her at the theatre. She found him at the stage entrance, engaged in an animated discussion in regard to a quarrel which had broken out during the rehearsal. The leading lady and the soubrette had almost come to blows in their rivalry for the affections of the comedian, who was frightfully ugly. The company was divided into two camps, one side taking the part of the leading lady and the other that of the soubrette. The discussion continued with coarse and violent speech, and Pascal excitedly took part in it. Criquette led him away, impatient to put an end to his share in the dispute; but Pascal, full of the matter, all the way home related to her, with the most insignificant details,

all that had taken place. And Criquette, as she listened, thought:

"I will not go to Mademoiselle Lemuche's again. I should draw a comparison which I must not—will not make. Is it Pascal's fault that he has not the distinction of that young man? He was good to my mother, and he is good to me. It is my duty to love him as he is, love him now, and love him forever."

And Criquette did not go to Mademoiselle Lemuche's again, but Count Etienne continued for a month to come to the theatre every time that Criquette's name appeared upon the bill.

One day, toward the end of the month, Criquette was rehearsing a three-act piece. They had finished the first act.

"I am not on in the second act," she said to Pascal; "I am going to take a little walk, and I will be back for the third act."

It was very warm, and Criquette, to get a little fresh air, made her way toward those peaceful, silent streets which slept in the shadow of the cathedral. Leaving the Promenade des Jacobins, she entered the Rue de l'Evêché, turned to the left by the Rue du Château, and reached that little square where is situated the house of Scarron, which is one of the marvels of Mans. Dominated by the enormous mass of the cathedral, and surrounded by old houses which seemed to have absorbed from their very nearness to the church an ecclesiastical, monkish air, this little square, sombre, dark, and dead, had only one outlet—the

alley which gave access to the Pans-de-Garron staircase.

Here Criquette stopped and leaned against the tower of Scarron's house, between the two high walls that inclosed the broad, chipped, and worm-eaten steps of the staircase; from here she could contemplate a vast extent of country sparkling in the sunshine and bathed in the golden haze which floated and trembled over the verdure of the meadows. The cathedral chimes, soft and velvety, rung out in that immense silence, that grand peace. And Criquette remained there, dazed by the light, lulled by the music of the bells, in a sort of vague reverie, a thousand leagues from the theatre and her rehearsal.

She thought herself alone, and yet there was someone not three steps behind her. As she left the theatre, Count Etienne was passing in a carriage through one of the streets which run into the Promenade des Jacobins. He stopped his horse, threw the reins to his groom, and followed Criquette. He was very young, only twenty-four, and very much in love, which must be his excuse —admitting the necessity of an excuse.

When Criquette stopped near the tower, he approached her slowly, his heart beating fast, but resolved to speak.

So Criquette heard suddenly this single word, spoken scarcely above a breath:

"Mademoiselle!"

She turned, uttered a slight exclamation as she recognized him, and remained there before him,

trembling a little, with her back against the wall.

"Mademoiselle, pardon me; it is all due to chance. I saw you from a distance, and I could not resist the temptation. You know what I want to say to you, I think. I love you—I love you with all my soul."

"Oh! Monsieur, hush! Hush, please! If you only knew how unhappy it makes me. It is my fault, too. Yes, from the first day I saw you, I knew, from the way you looked at me—from the way you spoke to me—that you were according me more attention than I deserved."

"Yes, from the first day I began to love you."

"And I, from the first day, should have had courage—should have told you how things are. Do you know that many times, seeing you come to the theatre every evening, I have thought of writing you? But it was too difficult. I have the courage now, however, to tell you all. My life is not my own. You must know that. You were at the theatre night before last?"

"Yes, I was there."

"A young man played my lover."

"Monsieur Pascal?"

"I see that you suspect what I am going to tell you. Yes, Pascal. He would be my husband if very cruel circumstances had not prevented me marrying him. I have not always been happy, but I am so now, as much as I can ever be, thanks to him—you understand—thanks to him. I have given myself to him entirely, freely, and forever.

I never loved anyone before him; and I think, if he should leave me, I could never love anyone after him."

"But even if, without the slightest hope, it pleases me to love you; if I find happiness in that—"

"Do not speak like that. In such a case, we should both of us find only pain and sorrow. It would make me suffer to think that you suffered through me, and you would suffer if you love me. Go away! I implore you, go away! You must not remain here longer. The day of your first visit to Mademoiselle Clémentine you said that you intended to pass only two weeks at Louvercy, then go to Paris for two or three months, and then, with one of your friends, depart on a long journey."

"Yes; those were my plans."

"You must carry them out."

"Those were my plans, but I saw you, and I have staid here on your account."

"And now you must go away on my account. I know what you are; I know all your goodness and kindness. Mademoiselle Clémentine has spoken of you to me so often! Your tastes are noble ones. You are not one of those who are of no use except to wander about the stage-door of a theatre; you can—you must—make another use of your life than to hear every evening a poor little provincial actress attempt drama and farce."

"Go on, say what you like; but take care! Do you know what will be the result of your words? I am going to love you more than ever."

"I do not forbid you to love me, but only a little and at a distance. Let us both keep a sweet memory of our short acquaintance. Ah, yes; I wish that! But go away. If not for your own sake, then for mine. You see I am speaking very openly. I am very sincere, and I shall be so until the end, certain that you will not misinterpret the sense of my words. I have had no thought of rendering you love for love. No, never! You must have no doubt of that, no hope; but you have brought into my life a certain uneasiness—a vague trouble. I shall be more tranquil when you are no longer here. That is why I ask you to go."

"I will go to-morrow."

"I thank you."

She gave him her hand. She had not put on her gloves when she left the theatre. He raised Criquette's hand to his lips, and placed a long kiss upon her fingers.

"If you take this long journey, and you must take it, write to Mademoiselle Clémentine, and I shall hear of you."

"And I of you, through her answers. And if I am at the end of the world, there will be there, at the end of the world, someone who has not forgotten you."

"Nor shall I forget you. *Au revoir!* Who knows? We shall meet again, perhaps; but not before your departure. Promise me that."

"I promise."

She had not withdrawn her hand, and he

impressed upon it a second kiss, longer than the first. She disengaged herself, made a few steps to go, and then, turning, said to him:

"*Au revoir!*"

In his turn, he remained with his back to the tower, watching her as she walked away.

"That charming girl," he said to himself, "is a very good woman."

He was right to think so, but the distribution of rôles in this world is not always what it should be; there are many errors in the cast of the immense tragi-comedy played on this terrestrial stage by a billion human creatures who love and hate. The parts of good women are not always taken by good women; and, on the other hand, she who was made to walk with a firm, calm step in the straight path is condemned very often to drag herself, with feet torn and bleeding, through the brambles and thorns of winding ways.

Criquette played that evening. Mademoiselle Lemuche came to her dressing-room before the curtain rose.

"He came to see me," she said, "after leaving you, and told me all. You did perfectly right."

"I did my duty, that is all."

"He goes away to-morrow. I have understood why you have not been to see me lately. You must come again now."

"Yes, I will come."

Monsieur de Sérignan was not in the audience, but, seated in the orchestra stalls, was a person-

age whose presence wrought the actors and actresses up to the highest pitch of excitement. The rumor spread like a train of powder: "There is a manager from Paris in front!" And for whom did this manager come? For whom? Anxiety seized all hearts. Poor people! resigned and brave in a hard calling, having many littlenesses, jealousies, and absurdities—what profession is exempt from them?—but preserving still, in spite of all, hope and illusion, watching eternally, as for a Messiah, for a manager from Paris, who, touched by their simulated anguish, or amused by one of their grimaces, shall carry them away from their obscure provincial theatre and launch them in the great city upon the full tide of success.

This evening the manager came for no one. He was passing a day or two at Mans with one of his friends, and was to return to Paris the next day by the eleven o'clock express. Curiosity had brought him to the theatre; he might possibly find there some unlooked-for treasure. There is much chance in the discovery of stars, on the stage as well as in the sky.

All Criquette's comrades, excited to excess by the presence of the Paris manager, tried to show forth their good qualities to the best advantage, and only succeeded in exaggerating their faults; they were detestable, everyone of them, beginning with Pascal. Criquette played a rôle full of tenderness and emotion; under the influence of her meeting with Monsieur de Sérignan—content with him, content with herself—she had in her

heart precisely the sentiments demanded by her part. She played very naturally, very simply; not like an actress animated by a fictitious emotion, but like a woman moved by a real passion.

The next day was beautifully bright and sunny, and Pascal proposed to Criquette to go and breakfast at Yvré-l'Evêque, at Tempier's restaurant. There was no rehearsal, and they would have the entire day to themselves. Criquette accepted eagerly. The poor child's conscience troubled her. She reproached herself for that slight emotion awakened in her heart by a love other than that of Pascal. She determined to think no more of anyone but him. If there existed a world where tastes were more delicate and words gentler, this world was not and never would be hers. Her world was the world of Pascal—her life the life of Pascal.

At half-past nine they were both passing through the court of the hotel, when they were stopped by a visitor, who was none other than the famous manager from Paris.

"Mademoiselle," said he, "I have come to see you."

"Me, Monsieur?"

"I am the manager of a theatre in Paris. I saw you play last night. If you like, there is a place in my company for you."

"For me? And for him, also?" she asked, designating Pascal, who played a supernumerary in this scene, and whose face was flushed with embarrassment.

"Ah!" rejoined the director. "You form a partnership, do you?"

"An indissoluble one," replied Criquette, smiling.

"Of course, last evening I listened to you with much pleasure, Monsieur. You have talent, but you play the lover's parts; and at present I am overstocked with lovers."

"Well, Monsieur, have the kindness to remember our names—Monsieur Pascal, Mademoiselle Gilberte—and when you are not overstocked with lovers, when you have need of both an *ingénue* and a lover, think of us."

While she was speaking, the manager scrutinized her with extreme attention. Seen thus near to, in the full light of day, she seemed to him more charming even than she did the evening before. She was really young, which was not the case with all stage *ingénues*.

"Well," he said, with a shrug of his shoulders, "although I have too many lovers already, if you do not ask too much money, and I do not have to pay too dear for this indissoluble partnership—"

"Oh, we will be reasonable, Monsieur," interrupted Pascal, quickly.

But Criquette stopped him.

"No, Pascal, we can not go to Paris just at present. Our manager, Monsieur Lemuche, is to retire next year. We have been members of his company for two years, Monsieur, and he has been very kind to us; so we have promised him not to leave him until his retirement."

"That is true," said Pascal; "but perhaps he would release us."

"I think he would, if we asked him to do so; but we must not ask him."

"Still, he would understand that our interests—"

"No, Pascal," she said, very firmly; "it would not be right." Then, addressing the manager, she continued: "We thank you for your offer, but we can not accept it. In a year, when we are free, we will write and place ourselves at your disposal. *Au revoir*, Monsieur."

They therefore remained at Mans. Criquette had another year of tranquil happiness, without, however, the enchantment of the first two years. At times she was seized by a vague uneasiness. It seemed to her that Pascal was no longer the same. She had very quickly recovered from the little shock given her by Monsieur de Sérignan, and had become herself again; that is to say—the sweetest and most affectionate of creatures. Pascal was everything to her, but she felt that she was no longer everything to Pascal.

She adapted herself wonderfully to her peaceable, obscure existence in a little provincial theatre. Her affection for Père César and Mademoiselle Lemuche became, day by day, stronger and more tender. She would have liked to prolong this halt in her life, to remain in that city where everybody was kind and good to her, to continue to play to that audience which was almost always the same and which always ap-

plauded her. The unknown frightened her; it attracted Pascal.

Toward the end of October, 1868, Criquette's conversation with the Paris manager had its direct counterpart in a conversation of Pascal with a manager from Bordeaux. The latter had passed an evening at the Mans theatre, and the next day he offered Pascal an engagement for the coming season at six hundred francs a month.

Pascal in his turn replied, referring to Criquette:

"We two are one."

"Ah! So much the worse. They don't like married people at Bordeaux. You are married, I suppose?"

"No," replied Criquette.

"Then it is less serious."

"I beg your pardon," said Criquette; "it is quite as serious."

"No, no, there is always a difference—for the public, at least."

He paid Criquette many compliments; but it was not an *ingénue* he was in search of, but a juvenile man. However, he consented to take Criquette also; he would give her three hundred francs a month.

"A thousand francs for us both," said Pascal.

"Nine hundred francs. Not a sou more."

Criquette wished to accept at once, but Pascal asked a delay of three days before deciding. He wished to write to that Paris manager who, six months before, had appeared disposed to

engage them. He did so, and the reply was by no means satisfactory. The manager offered Criquette two thousand francs a year, and he advised Pascal to come and tempt fortune in Paris. "You are," he wrote, "essentially an actor of melodrama, and you could certainly obtain a berth at the Gaîté or the Porte-Saint Martin."

That same evening, Pascal and Criquette sent their signatures to the Bordeaux manager.

The last representation given by Père César's company took place April 30, 1869. The posters bore these words: "For the benefit of Monsieur Lemuche, who retires after thirty years of theatrical management, eight of which have been passed at Mans." The prices were doubled, and the receipts reached the enormous sum of one thousand six hundred and twenty-two francs.

Pascal and Criquette were to leave for Bordeaux the next day at midnight. The evening of their departure they dined with Père Lemuche. When they arrived, their host left Pascal alone with his sister, and took Criquette into his study.

"Listen," he said to her; "promise me not to refuse what I am going to give you."

"But I must know first what it is."

"No, no; you shall know nothing until you have promised."

"Very well, I promise."

"Well, there was a big lie on my poster yesterday. It was not for my benefit that I gave that performance, but for yours, my child."

"Oh! I will not allow it, Monsieur Lemuche; I will not allow it."

"You have promised."

"Yes, I have promised; but money—"

"You have promised, and you will pain me very much if you do not accept it."

"Then I will accept it."

"Besides, to put you at your ease, I have arranged everything in a business-like way. I shall not give you the entire receipts; I have taken out my expenses. My performance yesterday will not bring me in anything, but it will not cost me anything. There are twelve hundred francs in this little pocket-book."

"Twelve hundred francs! But what can I do with all that? Pascal and I have saved more than a thousand francs, and we shall be rich at Bordeaux with our nine hundred francs a month. Give me the pocket-book without the money. That is what I would like."

"No, you must take all. Criquette, do not spoil my last evening with you."

"Very well, it shall be as you wish."

"Thank you, my dear; but that is not all. Remember this little house. You have come here very often in the last three years."

"Yes; and it is a great sorrow to leave it. You have been so good to me. If you only knew how grateful I am!"

"I do know, my child; but the best way of showing your gratitude will be never to forget this: So long as we are alive, my sister and I, or

so long as one of us is alive, this house will be yours. There will be always here a poor old couple who love you with all their hearts, and who will be always ready to receive you if—which God forbid—you find yourself, some day, alone in the world and unhappy. You will never, I think, be one of those who forget and console themselves in twenty-four hours."

"No, I think not."

"No. If you meet with unhappy days, you must come here immediately, without any false shame. We shall certainly be sad to see you sad, but happy at the same time to have you with us. We understand one another, do we not?"

"Yes; if I am ever alone in the world, I will come back here."

"Exactly. And now kiss your poor old manager, and try to be happy, and try not to come back."

XV.

The third of May, 1870, a train stopped at Mans about ten o'clock in the morning; a young woman alighted from a second-class carriage and presented her luggage-check to a porter. The man looked at her and said:

"What! have you returned? I see that you do not recognize me. Louis—big Louis. My wife is the washerwoman opposite The Conqueror. You used to give sticks of barley-sugar to our little daughter."

"I remember now. Is your little daughter well?"

"Yes, very well. And you? You don't look very well."

"I am a little tired."

"And your friend, that tall young man, Monsieur—what was his name? You were always together. Monsieur ——"

"Pascal."

"That's it. Monsieur Pascal. Is Monsieur Pascal well?"

"Very well."

"He has not come back with you?"

"No. Please send my luggage to Monsieur Lemuche's."

"Avenue de Paris. I know. And are you

going to walk there? Don't you want me to get you a carriage?"

"No, no."

"But you are so pale."

"I have passed the night on the railway. I prefer to walk. The fresh air will do me good. Good-bye, my friend."

She left the station and walked slowly through the streets to the Avenue de Paris.

Père César and Mademoiselle Clémentine had just sat down to breakfast, when they saw the door open and Criquette appear.

"Yes," she said to them, "it is I. I am unhappy, I am alone, and you see I keep my promise. I have come here. Do you want me?"

"Do we want you?" cried Lemuche.

He drew her toward him, kissed her tenderly, and then it was the turn of Clémentine. Her reception was so warm and cordial that Criquette felt a little life enter her heart.

"You will remain here, dear child," said Clémentine; "and forever, if you like—forever!"

"Forever! Oh, no—only time enough for me to look around a little; but, in the first place, I must not keep you from your breakfast. Sit down, again, please. And, besides, I passed such a hard day, after such a cruel night, that I could eat neither breakfast nor dinner; so that, in spite of all, I am hungry now."

She ate some breakfast, and then, in spite of their protests, she insisted on telling her story. "Later, my child," they said to her; "rest and

think of nothing. We are going to take care of you; cure and comfort you."

"No," she answered; "let me speak. I want to have your opinion whether I have done right or not."

"I do not believe you have done wrong."

"Nor do I; but listen to me. In the first place, understand that I do not blame him—that I never shall blame him. I have had three years of happiness, and it is not every life that has had that. But at Bordeaux I very quickly perceived that something was beginning which was very different from what had gone before. In the first place, you two were no longer with me, and I commenced to love you away even more than I had loved you when near. You two formed a larger part of my happiness than I thought before I lost you. I had imagined that Pascal was everything to me; but there were you also."

"And you find us still the same."

"Yes, yes; I see it, I see it. We installed ourselves at Bordeaux in a rather uncomfortable apartment, and I commenced to pass there alone long hours—very long hours. Pascal was always out, always busy. Finally, last November, an actress came from Paris to replace one of ours who had been taken ill. She was neither very young nor very handsome, but she was very stylish, with quantities of diamonds. She made her début in a new drama, in which Pascal played an important part. I was not in the piece; but I went every evening to the theatre, and

we returned home together after the performance. The evening of the fourth representation, I put on my hat as usual after dinner, when Pascal said to me that I was making myself absurd by being always at his heels, and it made him look like a child in the care of its nurse. I made no reply, but took off my hat and staid at home. He returned very late that night—very late. About ten o'clock one evening of the following week, I was alone, as usual, when there came a ring at the bell. It was one of the members of the company, a young girl named Fanny, who had always been kind and pleasant to me. She was very indignant, and had come to tell me what was taking place at the theatre. I had suspected it beforehand. She gave me some advice, and explained to me how I could win Pascal back from this woman—how men like him should be treated. 'Seem to care for him no more,' she said, 'and he will adore you.' She wanted me to go to supper with her that very evening, but I refused. I wanted to speak to Pascal. He did not try to lie, but acknowledged all; he wept and threw himself at my feet—made me all the promises and vows in the world. This woman would never be anything more to him. He was in earnest, however, I am sure, when he spoke to me as he did; but three days after he allowed himself to be captured by her again. And that was my life for six months! You remember Madame Lacalpranède; it was something like that, only I had not her courage and resignation. He loved

me still, however, for he suffered from the pain he inflicted upon me, and came back to me with outbursts of repentance and tenderness; but the other was the cleverer and stronger. She obtained an engagement in Paris for herself, and one for him in the same theatre. They left together yesterday morning. He fled without daring to bid me good-bye. He made a mistake—I have nothing to reproach him with. Is it his fault that he no longer loves me? I thought of following him to Paris, and hesitated between him and you. He would have taken pity on me and would not have repulsed me. But afterward? The same struggle would have recommenced, and I had not the strength to face it. Moreover, there are people who know how to love a little after having loved much, but I am not one of them; so I have come to you. If your successor, Monsieur Lemuche, would consent to engage me, that would arrange everything. I should have the theatre, work, something to do, and at the same time I should have you."

"The Mans theatre amounts to nothing at all since I left it. I have other plans and other ideas for you, my child."

"And so have I, César," said Clémentine. "We will talk about it this evening."

There was a wide abyss between the plans and ideas of the brother and those of the sister. This was what César said to Clémentine that evening:

"I am going to begin to-morrow and make her

work at one of the great rôles of the répertoire, probably *Sylvia* in the "Game of Love and Chance," with all the traditions of Mademoiselle Mars. Then, in six months, I take Criquette to Paris; she will make her début at the Comédie-Francaise; or the Odéon, and the Parisians will see that she is a pupil of César Lemuche."

But this was Clémentine's answer to César:

"Take Criquette to Paris, where she will find Pascal again and all her sorrows! No! No more theatre for her! No more theatre! We must keep her with us; and I am sure that some day she will meet some good fellow who will have the courage to marry her without worrying too much about the past."

Thereupon the brother and sister discussed the question very warmly, the one for the stage and the other against it; but they were both agreed on this point, that they must keep Criquette and try to reconcile her as gently as possible to her lot. They would both work for this end with all their hearts. The poor child placed herself in their hands, and, in her gratitude for so much devotion and affection, she did not dare to appear sad; it would have made her seem an ingrate.

One evening, toward the end of May, Père Lemuche, during dinner, to amuse Criquette, repeated two or three of his most brilliant theatrical anecdotes, and, to please Père Lemuche, Criquette laughed, without too visible effort, her old-time laugh—that laugh which the little house in Mans had not heard since her return.

When Clémentine was alone with her brother, she said:

"She laughed."

"Yes, she laughed."

"Oh, we will cure her."

"And I will make her a great actress."

"As to that—no. She shall never tread the boards again."

During this colloquy, Criquette was in her room reading a letter from Monsieur de Sérignan which had arrived that day addressed to Mademoiselle Lemuche. The passage which particularly attracted her attention was as follows:

Say to your little friend, if she is still in Mans, and if she is not there, have the goodness to write her, that a certain traveler was at sea the tenth of March, 1870, on board the *Chow-Phya*, between Bangkok and Singapore. This traveler imagines very often that he can hear sound in his ears the cathedral bells of Mans. He has only to close his eyes to see again distinctly a young woman leaning against the tower of an old house. He has not forgotten this young woman, and he never will forget her. That she may be happy is his dearest wish.

At these words, "That she may be happy," the tears blinded Criquette's eyes. She let them flow unchecked, and found some sweetness in them instead of the usual bitterness.

And that evening, with all her soul, she prayed for that friend whom she scarcely knew, and who had thought of her the tenth of March, between Bangkok and Singapore.

XVI.

This friend, August 14, 1870, stopped before a little arch of triumph, erected in a meadow, in honor of a widow who had remained faithful to the memory of her husband. This was in the middle of China, at the gates of Kouy-fou, on the banks of the Blue River. Monsieur de Sérignan and his traveling companion, Marcel de Brême, deciphered laboriously the inscription engraved upon the arch of triumph:

"*Tchong tchen pou se eul Kiun, tchen fou pou se eul fou.*"

Then, with the aid of a father of the Hou-Pe mission who consented to serve as interpreter, they translated no less laboriously the Chinese inscription:

"*A good subject does not serve two sovereigns; a virtuous woman does not take two husbands.*"

The two young men were meditating upon this irreproachable maxim, when they perceived Lieou, one of their servants, running toward them and waving triumphantly in the air a little bundle of tarred cloth. It was a package of letters and newspapers which had been forwarded to them by the French consul at Shanghai. They had left this city early in July, and since that time they had always been far from the coast, journeying sometimes in a junk upon the rivers,

sometimes in a palanquin upon the roads. Their plan was to penetrate into the interior as far as Tchong-Kin-fou.

Letters from France! The bundle was soon ripped open. Sérignan seized a letter from his sister, and Marcel one from his mother. They devoured them at first with a glance, then read them slowly, sentence by sentence, word by word. All their people were well in the beginning of June, for the letters were more than two months old.

Then, reassured and breathing more easily, they sat down in the shade of a clump of bamboos and proceeded to demolish their voluminous correspondence. There were a dozen letters for each of them. The missionary took possession of a bundle of French newspapers, the most recent of which bore the date of June 9th. Twenty feet away, a laborer in a tucked-up blue robe, with his cue wound about his head, regarded the three Frenchmen who had found again their family, their friends, and their country.

Etienne and Marcel first opened the letters directed in known and loved handwriting, and that is why the last letter opened by Monsieur de Sérignan was one whose envelope bore no stamp, and whose address was in an unknown hand; but when he had cast his eyes over it, he leaped to his feet, crying:

"Marcel! And you, too, Father!"

The priest was standing a short distance away, but at the exclamation he came forward.

"What is it?" asked Marcel.

"War!" answered Sérignan. "War declared. War begun between France and Prussia. They are fighting, perhaps at this moment, upon the Rhine."

They were indeed fighting that day, but it was not upon the Rhine; it was under the walls of Metz.

The two young men had only to glance at one another to come to an understanding and agree on what they must do. An hour after, they departed for Shanghai. They arrived there the second of September, waited five days for the departure of the Messageries boat, and disembarked at Marseilles the twentieth of October, after a voyage of terrible anxiety; for all the way—at Saïgon, Colombo, Aden, Port-Saïd, everywhere awaited them frightful news, which planted despair in their French hearts. Finally, at Marseilles, they learned that the war was not ended. They would at least have the consolation of fighting.

Jean de Brême, Marcel's brother, had once served in Rome as an officer of the pontifical guards. A corps was reorganizing at Mans under the name of the Western Volunteers; Jean de Brême commanded the second company of the first battalion, and it was under his orders that the two young men were to serve.

They reached Tours by way of Bordeaux. Etienne left Marcel to go on, hastened to greet his sister, who inhabited a château not far from Tours, and departed the next day for Mans.

Forty-eight hours later he was equipped, and under the blue vest of the zouaves, was drilling upon the Place des Jacobins, in front of the theatre. He was a little new to the trade, and so in the beginning he worked alone under the direction of one of his friends, who was a corporal in his company. While executing as well as he could the various manœuvres, he looked at the theatre, and thought of César Lemuche and Clémentine Lemuche, and especially of a charming girl who had acted in that building. He did not know what had become of her, for he had no time to go and see his old governess. If he had left Shanghai twenty-four hours later, he would have received the letter in which Mademoiselle Lemuche told him that their little Criquette had come back to them.

At six o'clock he was free, and rung the bell of the little house in the Avenue de Paris. Père Lemuche's maid was out, and Criquette was working alone in the *salon*. She came to open the door without a light. The night was dark, and she could only faintly distinguish the outlines of a soldier.

"What do you want, my friend?" she asked.

But he recognized the voice of the young girl.

"You here, Mademoiselle?"

She also recognized him now, and held out both her hands.

"Ah! how glad Mademoiselle Clémentine will be! She is in her room; I will call her."

But he would not release her hands.

"In a minute," he said; "in a minute. I am so happy to find you again."

He led her into the *salon*, and gazed upon her bonny face.

"Do you find me changed?"

"Yes."

"I have had much sorrow. He has left me. He no longer loved me."

"He no longer loved you!"

"No."

"But then another has the right to love you—the right to tell you so."

"No! no! No one has that right. I consented not to seek Mademoiselle Clémentine at once, because I thought that an explanation between us two was necessary."

"An explanation! Why? I commenced to love you two years ago. Let me continue."

"That is precisely what I do not wish, and you will understand why, presently. Sad and forsaken, I came here. I have suffered much. I am a little less unhappy to-day; and then, besides, one sees so many heart-rending things now that one has scarcely the time to suffer for one's own troubles. By what an excellent good woman I was received in my distress, you know better than anyone. She treats me like her own child. Only this morning she said to me: 'You are my daughter.' Now, you must understand what duties such a situation imposes on us both."

"Yes, I understand."

"I was sure you would. I will call Mademoiselle Clémentine."

Etienne de Sérignan did not leave Mans until the tenth of November, to go with the first two battalions of volunteers to encounter the Prussians. Till then he passed an hour or two almost every evening in Père Lemuche's little house; but he kept his promise, and Criquette was troubled by no word or look.

He came as usual the evening before his departure; he was to start the next morning at five o'clock, and he bade all three farewell. He kissed Mademoiselle Lemuche, and then he extended his hand to Criquette.

"Kiss her, too," said Clémentine, brusquely, with her eyes full of tears.

He kissed her.

Three weeks after, the second of December, in the heroic charge of Loigny, fell, never to rise again, one of those two young men who, three months before, had amused themselves in deciphering the inscription on the arch of triumph of the widow of Kouy-fou. This was Marcel de Brême. Etienne was unhurt; he dug himself, after dark, at Patay, under the snow in the middle of a field, the grave of the friend of his childhood, the companion of his youth.

The first battalion of zouaves was reduced to five hundred men, ragged and torn, absolutely in no condition to fight. They were sent to Poitiers, from there to Tours, and finally, on the twenty-third of December, a train transported them to Mans. It was in this city that was collected from all sides, under the command of General Chanzy,

that crowd of a hundred and fifty thousand men which was destined to be the last army of France.

On this day, they sent from Tours to Mans more than twenty military trains, which advanced very slowly, being constantly checked by the obstructions on the road. Cooped up since seven o'clock in the morning in freight-cars, the zouaves did not arrive at Mans until nightfall, worn out with fatigue, icy with cold, dying with hunger.

Under the direction of two sisters of charity, a hospital had been established in the largest of the railroad waiting-rooms. The sick and wounded, as they left the train, could thus receive immediate care. Many ladies of the city came to offer their assistance, and among them, the most active, gentle, and brave was Criquette. She passed all her days there, and sometimes her nights. Mademoiselle Lemuche was often obliged to come and take her away by force in order that she might obtain some rest.

One of the sisters had taken a great fancy to Criquette.

"You were made to be a nun," she said to her one day.

"I thought of taking the veil once, sister, but circumstances prevented me. I have regretted it very often."

As the train bringing the zouaves entered the station, Criquette was wrapping his cloak about a dragoon who had spent some hours in the hospital; wounded in the right arm, he could not

assist himself. When his cloak was adjusted, he said to Criquette:

"I had a woolen scarf also."

It was an old muffler all in rags. Criquette shook it out and tied it about his neck.

"Thank you, Mademoiselle, thank you," said the dragoon. "You have been very kind to me. I must go to the mayor's office now. Where is the mayor's office?"

She conducted him to the door of the station and pointed out the way.

He shook her hand.

"Thank you, Mademoiselle, thank you."

No one ever said Madame. Everybody called her Mademoiselle. With her thin, pale face, which made her eyes look larger and brighter still, she had, in spite of her twenty-one years, the appearance of a young girl—almost of a child.

She was about to return to the hospital, when these words fell upon her ear:

"Here is the train with the pontifical zouaves."

The zouaves! and among them, doubtless, Monsieur de Sérignan. She had received from him two letters of ten or twelve lines each, the first dated from Meung, twenty-four hours after the battle of Patay, and the second from Tours; but she had received another letter, from Paris—one of those poor little letters, wet with fog, which were thrown from balloons. Pascal had written to her.

Criquette went out upon the platform, and im-

mediately recognized the blue mantles of the zouaves. Stiff with the cold, and embarrassed with their guns and knapsacks, they alighted painfully, one by one.

She perceived Monsieur de Sérignan standing in the doorway of one of the cars. He also saw her, and it was upon her he leaned as he descended, for he was obliged to lean upon someone.

"You tremble," she said to him.

"A little fever—it is nothing; but how do you happen to be here?"

"To receive you, and to take care of you if you are ill. Come! I will explain."

There was a stove with benches about it in a corner of the hospital. Criquette led him there, made him sit down, and returned in a few minutes with a large bowl of bouillon; and he, without a word, commenced to drink slowly, while she stood near watching him.

"Say nothing! Drink! Rest and warm yourself!"

It was only a chill, which soon passed away, and Criquette's presence certainly contributed to the prompt cure. Other soldiers came and stood silently about the stove.

"I am better," he said; "I am well."

"What do you intend to do? Where are you going?"

"Our battalion is to be quartered in the city, at Sainte-Croix, but I have obtained leave of absence for twenty-four hours. I shall pass the

day at home—at Louvercy. I wrote yesterday from Tours to my steward, to tell him to come and meet me with a carriage. I wonder if he received my letter?"

"I will see if he is here."

"Presently. Wait—give me a few minutes. I am so happy to see you again."

"And I am also very happy to see you."

Yes, very happy—too happy even. She drew away her hand, which Monsieur de Sérignan held clasped in his. She felt that she must resist the emotion which was taking possession of her. She felt that she had something to say, and she said it bravely.

"During your absence I have received a letter from him."

"Where is he?"

"In Paris."

"And what did he write you?"

"That he loves me still, that he has never loved anyone but me, that he can not live without me. He implores me to forgive him. When he can come, he will."

"And what do you intend to do?"

"If he is alone and unhappy, how can I repulse him—him, who never repulsed me when I was alone and unhappy? How could I help forgiving him?"

The arrival of the steward put an abrupt end to their interview; for a quarter of an hour he had been searching for his master, without being able to find him in the crowd at the station.

Criquette was left alone, and immediately resumed her work in the hospital, but without being able to shake off the feeling of oppression that had seized upon her. She asked herself if there was still a little happiness in store for her, and who would give her that happiness—the one who was below there in Paris and who was once everything to her, or the one whom she had just seen, and who occupied to-day so large a place in her thoughts?

Her very doubt was the clearest and most pitiless of answers. From the moment that she deliberated, it was no longer Pascal that she loved; after loving so much, to love less is to love not at all. From her father and mother, who were simple, honest people, she had received a heart prone to duty and honor. She had said one day to Pascal: "Take me, keep me, I am your wife." It was for life that she had given herself, and she had no right to retract the gift. What! She would answer Pascal: "I no longer love you, I love another; and that other is rich, while you are poor." Never should such words pass her lips. Never! Never! It seemed that she could belong neither to the man she had loved nor to the one she loved now. She had given herself hardily, with a clear conscience, to her first love; but before a second love, her loyalty and purity revolted. She foresaw with horror the third after the second. That had been Rosita's life; sometimes forsaken, sometimes forsaking. She was not made for such an existence.

She looked about her with an immense pity for all the misery and suffering she saw. At Beauvais, she had passed through an attack of religious fervor, and, in the distress of her soul, had wished to remain in the convent and give herself to God. It was the same impulse now, but nobler and loftier. She was inspired with a longing for self-sacrifice and charity. She wished to give herself to the poor and the sick. What tempted her now was no more the premature death of the cloister, but a life of sacrifice and immolation. She would have no more struggles with herself, no more heart-burns. She would no longer have to support the burden of her own existence; her sufferings would disappear and be swallowed up in the sufferings of others.

During the two weeks that followed, she saw Monsieur de Sérignan several times, in the evening, at Mademoiselle Clémentine's. She scarcely dared to speak to him or look at him. Fortunately, she was spared the pain of bidding him another farewell. During the night of the eighth of January, the first battalion of zouaves received orders to march early in the morning and take up a position at Yvré-l'Evêque; they were placed under the orders of General Gougeard.

At eight o'clock the battalion started, with drums beating and flags flying, and four hundred soldiers, belonging almost all to the greatest and richest families of France, encamped upon the banks of the Huisne, close to a camp of Breton volunteers. Those who had left their châteaux,

and those who had left their huts, were to die side by side upon the hill-sides of Auvours. To all is due the same remembrance—to all the same gratitude.

On the tenth of January, General Gougeard, with the zouaves at the head of the column, made a sortie in the direction of Ardenay. For two hours there was a constant fusillade in the woods, and even in the fields and roads. The Prussians were driven back. In the evening the French troops reformed, and in good order returned to Yvré. The battalion of zouaves and the battalion of Breton volunteers had both cruelly suffered. This time again, as at Loigny, Monsieur de Sérignan escaped without a scratch.

The next morning they were all under arms again. Everyone felt that the decisive hour was approaching. The battle was at first to the advantage of the French, but at two o'clock the Prussian columns mounted the hills of Auvours and succeeded in driving away the division charged with defending them.

The zouaves were waiting in the village, with their ranks formed, when they saw the French troops descend in disorder upon Yvré and pour over the little bridge. Protected by trees, shrubs, and bushes, the Prussian infantry held the hills, which must be retaken or the battle was lost.

Then, uniting a battalion of infantry, two battalions of volunteers, and the pontifical zouaves, General Gougeard himself took command of the

attack, and addressing the zouaves, who led the column, he cried:

"Now, forward, gentlemen! Forward, for God and the fatherland!"

Then, with the general at the head, they charged forward, under the fire of the Prussians, without stopping to answer them. On the way, the zouaves met a battalion of the Tenth Chasseurs, standing there steady at their post in the midst of the general rout. "Long live the chasseurs!" cried the zouaves. "Long live the zouaves!" responded the chasseurs. They dashed forward together, and were soon masters of the place. All the positions were retaken; but two-thirds of the battalion of zouaves lay stretched upon the snow

Etienne de Sérignan succeeded in traversing only half of this space strewn with the dead and wounded. He was stopped on the way by a Prussian bullet. He felt a sensation as of a violent blow upon his right arm. The pain was not very great. "Some spent ball," he thought; "it is nothing." He continued to advance, but suddenly his arm fell to his side. He tried to raise it, but could not; his hand was covered with blood. He felt faint and weak, and, stopping, leaned against a tree. Twenty steps distant was an abandoned house, and near the house a shed, beneath which was a little straw. He made a great effort to drag himself there—fell, finally reached it, and fainted. The bullet had opened a vein, which caused a violent hemorrhage, checked suddenly by his unconsciousness. It was already

growing dark. Sérignan could hear faintly the trumpets sounding the charge upon the hills of Auvours. Then he heard nothing more, and remained there, forgotten, abandoned, in the darkness, under that ice-covered shed.

XVII.

It was there that Sérignan was found an hour later, by a man with a lantern, who was searching the ground for the wounded. He called his companion.

"Here is one!"

"Where?"

"Under the shed. Ah! he is not wounded; he is dead. He does not move."

"No, he is not dead. His fingers just moved a little. Let us raise him."

Sérignan murmured:

"Drink! Drink!"

They placed him upon the litter, and carried him to the hospital which had been established at Yvré, in the school-room of the convent. Just as they arrived there, two zouaves, who had been wounded, one in the shoulder and the other in the hand, were leaving the hospital, where their wounds had been dressed, and were just about to enter a carriage which was waiting to take them to Mans. They recognized Sérignan, took his hand and spoke to him. Not a word, not a movement. They thought him dead, and left him.

When they alighted from the carriage at Mans, they were surrounded by a crowd of anxious relatives and friends eager for news. Criquette

was there, and she managed with difficulty to approach one of the zouaves.

"Monsieur de Sérignan?" she asked.

"Sérignan?"

He was about to add, "He is dead," but Criquette's eyes were fixed upon him with such sorrowful eagerness that the cruel answer refused to pass his lips.

"He has been wounded," he said.

"Seriously?"

"I fear so."

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes; I saw them carrying him to the hospital."

"What hospital?"

"With the sisters, at Yvré."

Seriously wounded, with the sisters at Yvré. Criquette remained lost in thought for some little time, and then she rapidly made her way in the direction of the Avenue de Paris. It was seven o'clock in the evening. Clémentine knew that Criquette had gone to Sainte-Croix, and when she saw her, she exclaimed:

"Have you heard anything?"

"No; but I want your permission to go away at once. There are many wounded men at the station, and I have promised the sisters to pass the night with them."

"But you have not dined."

"I am not hungry. Please do not detain me."

"You will kill yourself with overwork."

"Not I! I was never better."

She went up to her room and wrapped herself up as warmly as possible, for the cold was terrible. In a few minutes she started out, enveloped in a big cloak, and with a heavy scarf of black worsted wrapped round her head. She was going to Yvré; but she was stopped at the gates of the city, where there were indescribable tumult and confusion. Isolated soldiers, wagons filled with the wounded, others full of furniture, women with children in their arms, peasants driving cattle before them; in short, war and invasion.

A score of the National Guards were stationed at the gates, and they questioned those who wished to enter, and exacted passports from those who wished to depart. When Criquette presented herself, one of the men said to her:

"Your passport!"

"I have none."

"Go to the mayor and get one."

"Oh! do not send me back! I am going to Yvré. My—my brother has been wounded. He is at the hospital with the sisters."

"And you are going there all alone?"

"Oh, I know the road well, and I am not afraid. Please let me pass."

He stood aside, and she passed through the gate. Yes, she knew the road—that road to Yvré! How many times, for three years, had she walked gaily over it, arm in arm with Pascal, in the shade of those poplars which now rose before her like great phantoms in the night! She walked on alone in the direction of Yvré, and

suddenly ran into a crowd of disbanded soldiers. Among the number were many who, wounded and dragging themselves painfully along, stopped now and then and leaned against the trees to regain their strength and recover their breath. There were also some who, worn out, incapable of a longer effort, burned up with fever, tortured with their wounds, fell in the middle of the road, no matt r where, upon the hardened snow, and remained there motionless, unconscious, inert, half-dead. They would have let themselves be crushed by the wagons and trampled upon by the horses, if their comrades had not raised them and carried them to the fields, where they left them to the mercy of God.

Everyone was thinking of himself, and no one paid any attention to Criquette. She ran almost all the way of the two miles which separated Mans from the outskirts of Yvré. She knew that the convent was on the left of the principal street, near the church. She remembered that she had stopped there one day with Pascal, to see the children come out of school. They had even talked to a pretty little girl with blue eyes and floating golden hair. At each step all along the road she had been assailed by memories of other days—days of happiness and love.

Here at last was the convent. All the windows were lighted. A numerous group of soldiers were standing before the door, and among them some zouaves. Then an agonizing thought seized her—if he were dead! She had not thought of

that before; he might have died in the last two hours.

She addressed one of the zouaves:

"I am seeking a wounded man," she said to him; "one of your men, Monsieur de Sérignan."

"Sérignan? He is there in a little room to the right as you go in."

"How is he?"

"Better—much better."

The two big school-rooms were crowded full when Monsieur de Sérignan was brought to the hospital; so they had placed him upon some straw in a little room on the ground floor. He very soon recovered his consciousness. A surgeon cut away one of his sleeves and dressed the wound, which was not serious. A bullet had passed through his fore-arm, but without breaking it and without rupturing an artery; but a large vein had been opened. As soon as the surgeon had finished his work they left the wounded man upon the straw, all dressed, with his blue cloak thrown over him. The room was lighted by a smoking candle planted in a bottle. Sérignan lay there, his eyes closed, in a sort of mental and physical torpor.

As Criquette entered, his left hand was moving about with vague, uncertain gestures. He was evidently seeking something.

Criquette bent over him.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"My flask," he said in a weak voice. "My flask; there was a little brandy in it."

"Where was it?"

"Where was it? In one of the pockets of my cloak, I think."

Criquette found the flask, unscrewed the top, and placed it to his lips.

"Thanks, sister, thanks."

One of the sisters, a quarter of an hour before, had given him a drink.

Refreshed by the brandy, Sérignan opened his eyes, raised his head a little, looked about him, and saw two great black eyes smiling sweetly at him.

"You! Is it you?"

"Yes; it is I. You know well that I always come to you when you are suffering."

"We are at Mans, then; in the hospital at the station."

"No; you are at Yvré. But don't fatigue yourself; don't try to understand anything. You have been wounded very slightly. Rest, and try to sleep a little."

"Then sit down there near me."

He took her hand, and she sunk down beside him upon the straw which covered all the floor of the room.

"I will say nothing; but speak to me, speak to me! Let me hear your voice. How do you happen to be here?"

She told him how she had gone to Sainte-Croix to try to obtain news of him, and how she had learned from one of his comrades that he was in the hospital at Yvré.

"And you came to me all alone in the night! Ah! my dear child! my dear child!"

He held Criquette's hand close to his lips, and upon this hand, mingling with his kisses, fell slowly the hot tears from his eyes. They both remained thus a long time, a very long time, in a silence more eloquent and more impassioned than all the words in the world.

About midnight, as his arm was paining him, Criquette went for some warm water and bandages, and herself bathed his wound with much skill and delicacy.

"You see," she said, smiling, "I am not a very bad nurse. I have missed my vocation. I should have been a sister of charity. I am more fitted for that than for the theatre. I told you so the other day, but you would not believe me. Do you believe me now?"

The day dawned; but a gray, sombre day, with skies still full of snow. The battle was begun again before Yvré; the Prussians were trying to force the passage of the river.

"They are fighting quite near here," said Sérignan to Criquette; "perhaps it would be better if you were to return to Mans. I wish you to go."

"I shall not leave you," she answered.

The fusillade, which was at first very lively, gradually grew less and less, and had completely died away when the surgeon came, about nine o'clock, to the room where Sérignan lay.

"Well," said he, "are you better?"

"Yes, much better. But what has happened?"

"The Prussians tried to cross the river; they have been repulsed and driven beyond the railroad."

"Then all is going well for us?"

"On that side, yes; but elsewhere, no. We are invaded on the right toward Pontlieue; orders have been received to retreat to Alençon."

"And the wounded?"

"The wounded? Those who can rise and walk must try to reach Mans. The rest will remain here. I have not a carriage at my disposal. There is not a wagon left in the village."

"Then I must walk."

"Do not try it. You can not."

Sérignan made an effort to rise, but fell back at once, almost fainting.

"Oh, you can walk, can you?" said the surgeon, ironically.

"But could he be taken in a carriage?" asked Criquette. "Would there be no danger?"

"Danger? No, if he was well wrapped up. It is frightfully cold. But I tell you again that there is no carriage."

"Perhaps I can find one."

A few minutes afterward, despite the prayers and supplications of Sérignan, Criquette started out again, on foot and alone.

There were two large farms belonging to the domain of Louvercy, and one of them, Fontenilles, was between the château and Yvré-l'Evêque, about a mile and a half from the village. Criquette had been many times to Fonte-

nilles with Mademoiselle Clémentine, who considered herself a little at home upon Monsieur de Sérignan's property, and who was always glad to do the honors there. Besides, the tenants of Fontenilles, Père and Mère Brunet, were old friends of Mademoiselle Lemuche.

Criquette knew well the short cuts which in half an hour would take her to the farm. There she would find a carriage. She did not wish him to fall into the hands of the Prussians; she wished to take him home to Louvercy, and then only would her task be accomplished.

She had not gone far, however, before she was seized with a terrible weariness. It was too much fatigue for the frail, delicate girl. The road was rough and slippery. Criquette came to a steep ascent, and she was obliged to rest for some minutes to recover her breath. She felt at one and the same time burning hot and icy cold. A slight pain now and then seized her side and seemed to stop her respiration. In spite of all, however, her courage and energy did not fail.

She reached the farm at last. The gate was solidly padlocked. She saw, through the fog, the vast buildings which surrounded the court; all the doors and windows were closed. Not a sign of life anywhere. Criquette called out. No answer. She called again as loudly as she could, but every time that she cried, "Monsieur Brunet! Monsieur Brunet!" it seemed to tear her lungs. And still no answer.

What would become of her, if the farm was

abandoned? Her limbs were sore and bruised. She could never return on foot to Yvré. She made a new effort to make herself heard: "Monsieur Brunet! Monsieur Brunet!" and stood there, clinging with one hand to the gate, in order not to fall, and with the other waving her handkerchief.

And then a slight noise broke the death-like silence. It was the sound of an opening window. Brunet had not quitted Fontenilles, but alone with his wife and his dairy-maid—his two sons were in the army—he had barricaded himself in. He looked out of the window, and seeing the girl who had called to him, he came out.

All the carriages and horses had been confiscated; he had nothing left but a rickety wagon and an old spavined horse; but the drive from Fontenilles to Yvré and from Yvré to Louvercy is not long; the wagon-wheels could turn round and the horse walk for two hours.

Madame Brunet lighted a great fire, and Criquette, regaining her confidence, recovered also a little warmth and strength. She took, however, only a few minutes' rest; there was not an instant to lose. She made them put in the wagon a mattress and some blankets. With his great-coat buttoned about him and a fur cap pulled down over his ears, Brunet took his place on the front seat. Criquette crept into the wagon under the tattered old awning, and, nestling down among the blankets, she did not suffer much from the cold on the way to Yvré.

But an hour after it was Monsieur de Sérig-

nan who took his place in the body of the wagon. He lost consciousness as he was being carried from the convent. Criquette piled upon him all the blankets, but his fainting-fit continued. The surgeon had warned her, above all, to guard him from the cold. Then she took off her cloak and Brunet his overcoat, and both garments were added to the mountain of coverings which already enveloped Sérignan.

Seated in the wagon, open to all the winds, Criquette felt penetrated by the icy cold; chill after chill shook her, followed by sudden waves of heat which seemed to burn her chest.

Sérignan recovered his senses very slowly. He smiled at Criquette, slipped one of his arms outside the coverings, sought and found one of the hands of the poor girl, who at that moment was shaken by a chill; her hand trembled and her teeth chattered. Then Sérignan perceived that she had despoiled herself of her cloak to cover him; he forced her to take it back and to put on as well the farmer's great-coat.

"I was a little cold," said Criquette; "but I shall be warm presently. We are almost there. Look! There is the château. I have brought you home—yes, home! And I am so happy! so happy!"

She could scarcely speak. Her breathing was painful; she suffered cruelly, and yet she spoke only the truth. She was happy, and it was indeed a smile of happiness that played feebly about her trembling lips.

The wagon stopped in the court-yard of the château, and the steward and servants ran out to meet it. Criquette, despite the pain she was suffering, had still the courage to look after Sérignan, who, frightened at the change in her face, tried to induce her to take some rest.

"Do not worry on my account," she answered. "They have sent to Mans for a doctor, and for Mademoiselle Clémentine. As soon as she is here, I promise that I will rest. I am not ill, really."

When Mademoiselle Lemuche arrived, Criquette met her and said:

"He is better—much better. Do not be uneasy."

"But you, my poor child?"

"I? You arrive in time to take my place at his side. I can not hold out any longer."

The doctor, after he had seen both Sérignan and Criquette, said to Mademoiselle Lemuche:

"He is all right; he will be on his feet in a few days; but with her it is a different thing. She has inflammation of the lungs."

In the chamber at the château, which had been hers for thirty years, Mademoiselle Lemuche watched for eight days at Criquette's bedside.

It was the twentieth of January. Since morning Criquette's thoughts had been clouded, and among the confused words which issued painfully from her lips could scarcely be distinguished these fragments of sentences:

"The *Princess Colibri*—Wounded—With the sisters—At Yvré—I am cold—I am cold—A part

—There must be a part for Pascal—I had a friend at Beauvais—A big black dog—Pierrot—Send for him—I would like to see him—Pascal's porte-monnaie—I have money—I have money—I am cold—But he is not cold—Keep me—I am your wife—"

Many times during the day she looked at César Lemuche.

"Monsieur Lemuche," she said, "is it really you, Monsieur Lemuche?"

"Yes, my child, it is I."

"I want to work—My part, you know—*Sylvia*—There is a speech—What is it?—Yes, *Dorante*—Yes, *Dorante*, you love me—Ah! I can not remember—I can not remember—"

Monsieur de Sérignan had himself carried to Criquette's room, and it was to him that she addressed her last intelligible words: "To love you both—I could not. It is better so—yes, better so."

Criquette did not resist death, and death was kind to her and took her gently.

One morning in the month of May, 1873, a horseman rode slowly along the road which leads to Yvré-l'Evêque, across the hills of Auvours. On his way he looked at a ruined house with a shed near it, and remembered under what circumstances he had fallen one evening, unconscious, beneath that shed; and then in his recollections there was a hiatus of several hours.

He continued on his way, crossed the old bridge

over the Huisne, followed the chief street of the village, and came in sight of another house, a convent. Then the memories of other days awoke again. He saw again leaning over him, with her large dark eyes smiling down upon him, the noble, courageous girl who had come to his aid almost under the bullets of the Prussians.

He again continued his way, and after a few minutes stopped his horse. Over the little wall of the cemetery could be seen a grave, on which his eyes rested. There slept, in the eternal sleep, the one who had died for him.

At the same moment—it was eleven o'clock in the morning—they were placarding at Marseilles, upon the wall of the Théâtre-Français, an announcement which ran as follows:

THIS EVENING.

THE TOWER OF NESLE.

Monsieur PASCAL will play the rôle of BURIDAN.

And at the same moment, also, at Beauvais, Mademoiselle Aurélie was preparing to go out, and was carefully tying, before a glass, the strings of her bonnet. She was to be present, at half-past eleven, at a meeting of the lady patronesses of the Society for the Protection of Friendless Young Girls.

THE END.

GAUTIER'S MASTERPIECE.

SPIRITE.

By THEOPHILE GAUTIER.

Translated by ARTHUR D. HALL.

Beautifully Illustrated.

In Paper Covers, $1.00. In Half Morocco, $2.00.

"The plot of 'Spirite' is unique. * * * Gautier has outrivaled himself in delicate fancy, mysterious atmosphere and interest in this story of 'Spirite.'"—*Chicago Graphic.*

"The story is well developed, is interesting, and the climaxes are skillfully handled. * * * Particularly fascinating reading."—*Boston Times.*

"A creation such as only a spirit imbued with the loveliest dreams and images of poetry could conceive."—*San Francisco West End.*

"'Spirite' is but another of Gautier's beautiful works. He is a model. * * * The language is beautiful. Descriptions of people and places are pictures in themselves. His leading characters are admirable, and each one is well brought out."—*Chicago Globe.*

RAND, McNALLY & CO.,

PUBLISHERS,

Chicago and New York.

ISSUED IN THE RIALTO SERIES.

In Love's Domains.

A TRILOGY.

By MARAH ELLIS RYAN.

PRICE, 50 CENTS.

For Sale at all Booksellers' and News Stands

PRESS NOTICES.

"The poet's story is dreamy and full of fancy. The professor's story is grim and rugged. The Bohemian tells the chief story of the book. He has views more generally entertained in secret than in public. It is an entertaining book, and by no means an unprofitable one."—*Boston Times.*

"There are imagination and poetical expression in the stories, and readers will find them interesting."—*New York Sun.*

"All three are prettily written stories, very unlike each other, and the characters are very tenderly and lovingly defined."—*Chicago Times.*

"The longest story, 'Galeed,' is a strong, nervous story, covering a wide range, and dealing in a masterly way with some intricate questions of what might be termed amatory psychology. The shorter stories are in a somewhat different vein, but all are well told and readable."—*San Francisco Chronicle.*

"An unusually clever piece of work."—*Charleston News.*

"Marah Ellis Ryan has a good descriptive style, an acute sense of the dramatic in plot and incident, and a mastery of English that is comprehensive and intelligent."—*Chicago Graphic.*

SEND FOR COMPLETE CATALOGUE.

RAND, McNALLY & CO.,

PUBLISHERS,

Chicago and New York.

ISSUED IN THE RIALTO SERIES.

FABIAN DIMITRY

By EDGAR FAWCETT.

In Paper Covers, 50 cents. Cloth, $1.00.

For Sale at all Booksellers' and News Stands.

PRESS NOTICES.

"Mr. Fawcett has told in 'Fabian Dimitry' a strange story, and told it well. * * * All the characters are strongly sketched, and they are managed with a degree of skill which makes the story interesting for much more than the plot."—*New York Herald.*

"'Fabian Dimitry' is a most artistic novel. Intense in its vitality, brilliant and profound in its intellectual scope, and rising to the sublimity of sacrifice in its ideal of love, it is, indeed, a novel strangely calculated to thrill the imagination and stimulate every exalted quality in human nature."—*Boston Budget.*

"'Fabian Dimitry,' by Edgar Fawcett, is one of the best novels from the pen of that excellent writer."—*Kansas City Times.*

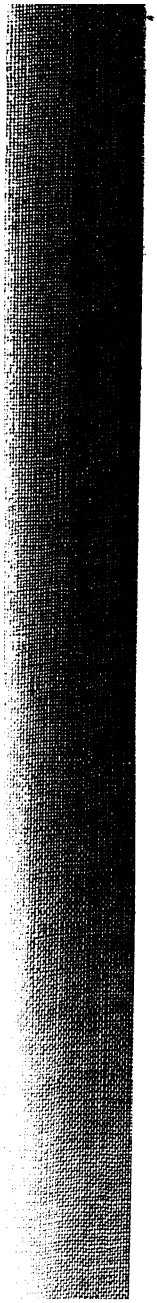
"In 'Fabian Dimitry,' Edgar Fawcett has given us a character study of the most pronounced kind. Not only the chief persons of the story, but the lesser characters, represent well known types of human development."—*Boston Times.*

"An unusual and original plot which Mr. Fawcett has developed in a manner that holds the interest of the reader from start to finish. * * * It is concise, direct and striking."—*America, Chicago.*

SEND FOR COMPLETE CATALOGUE.

RAND, McNALLY & CO.,

PUBLISHERS,

Chicago and New York.

YC177867